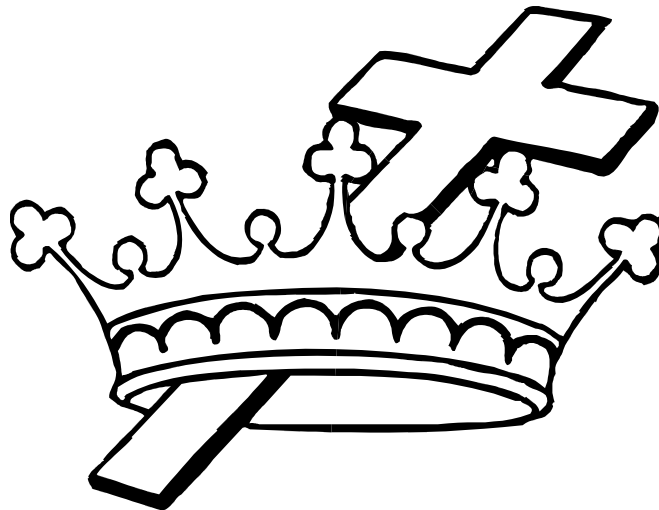


Reflection and Prayer

Our Time of Need

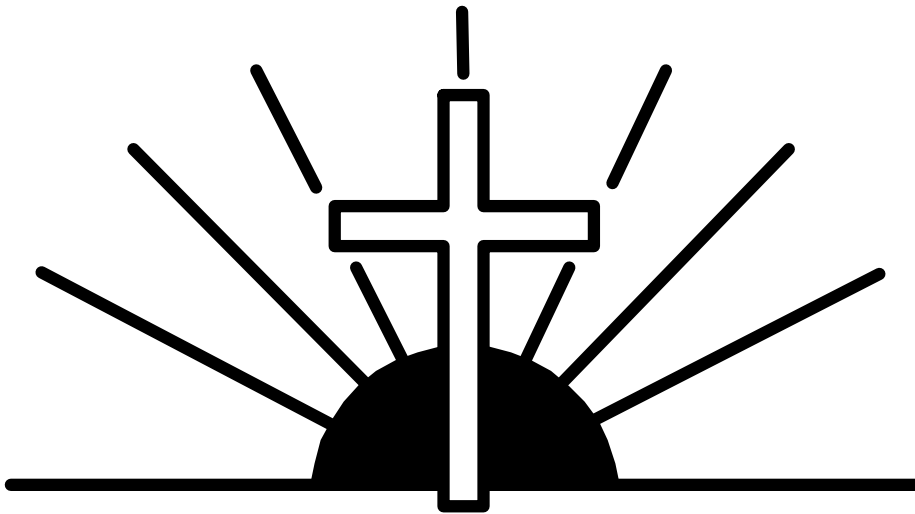
Evelyn C. Davis, Ed.D.
May, 2010
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Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16
New International Version

Receive a Blessing from the Lord



Goal of the Topic:

To bring our needs before the Lord, and to wait in expectation for his answers.

How To Start Each Day

Leader: *First, submit yourself to God.*

Reader 1: Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. (James 4:7–8a)

Leader: *Second, be strong in the Lord's power, and put on the full armor of God.*

Reader 2: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (Ephesians 6:10–13)

All: I thank you, Father, for the night, for your watchcare over me. Please forgive me for my sins. Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, and Holy Spirit, I now submit to you my spirit, soul, and body, and I plead the protection of the blood of Jesus over and around me this day. And by faith, and according to the Word of God, I put on the whole armor of God, that I may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

I put on the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, my loins girt about with truth, my feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and above all taking the shield of faith, with which I shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And I take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. (from Ephesians 6:14–17)

Leader: *Third, pray with all supplication 'in the Spirit.'*

Reader 1: And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be *alert* and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:18).

All: (There is a time of silent prayer, with each person presenting individual petitions.)

Leader: *And now receive a blessing from the Lord.*

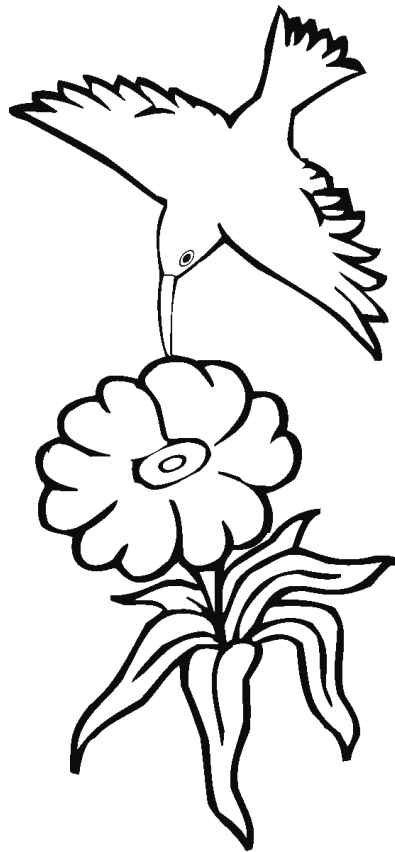
Reader 2: May the Lord bless you and keep you this day, may he cause his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, may he lift up his countenance upon you and give you his peace. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

AMEN

(Bible references are from the New International Version)

**Look at the birds of the air, for they
neither sow nor reap ... yet your
heavenly Father feeds them. Are you
not of more value than they?**

Matthew 6:26
New King James Version



Our Time of Need

Evelyn C. Davis, 2010

We ask God to give us new ideas, solutions to persistent problems, creative responses to difficult situations, and innovative ways to break the horns of dilemmas. However, sometimes we feel that the way this happens is similar to how the children of Israel were to enter the promised land—God said he would drive out the nations before them ‘little by little’ (Deuteronomy 7:22 NIV).

What are you currently dealing with? Some possible areas are listed, with Scripture verses for reference. Choose several for reflection and prayer (*they do not have to be done in order*).

Areas

1. Seeking Direction? and *Make My Life An Offering* (pages 6–7).
2. A Specific Unmet Need? and *Stop Whining* (pages 8–9).
3. Struggling with Relinquishment? and *None Other Lamb* (pages 10–11).
4. Disappointments, Discouragements, Mistakes, Sins? and *Changing Disappointment to His Appointment*; also *And God Said ...* (pages 12–15).
5. Going Through a Barren Time? and *I Refuse!* (pages 16–17).
6. Carrying a Heavy Burden or Going Through a Time of Testing? and *The Ant and the Contact Lens* (pages 18–19).
7. Health Issues? and *When Healing Doesn't Come*; also *When Sickness Hits ... Trust God* (pages 20–22).
8. Agonizing Over a Family Member or Friend? and *Scripture Prayers* (pages 24–25).
9. Grief or Loss? and *For This I Have Jesus* (pages 26–27).
10. Another Area of Concern? and *I'm Taking A Vacation From Worry* (pages 28–29).

Questions for Reflection

As you lift up an area to the Lord, ask him which of these questions you should focus on. With each area, there is space on the page for your answers.

1. What circumstances/situations brought a focus on this particular area of need?
2. Are there other persons involved, and if so, in what way?
3. What other factors are causing difficulty?
4. Is there a time frame that is causing particular stress?
5. Are there issues that need to be resolved with any other person(s)?
6. How is the Lord directing you toward resolution?
7. Can you list any steps of action that should be taken after considering the issue(s)?
8. Or ... might the Lord be directing you toward acceptance?
9. If so, can you list the specific circumstances/situations where you need to ‘close the door’ and trust the Lord for resolution?
10. Other:



Seeking Direction?

Lord, each day I will:

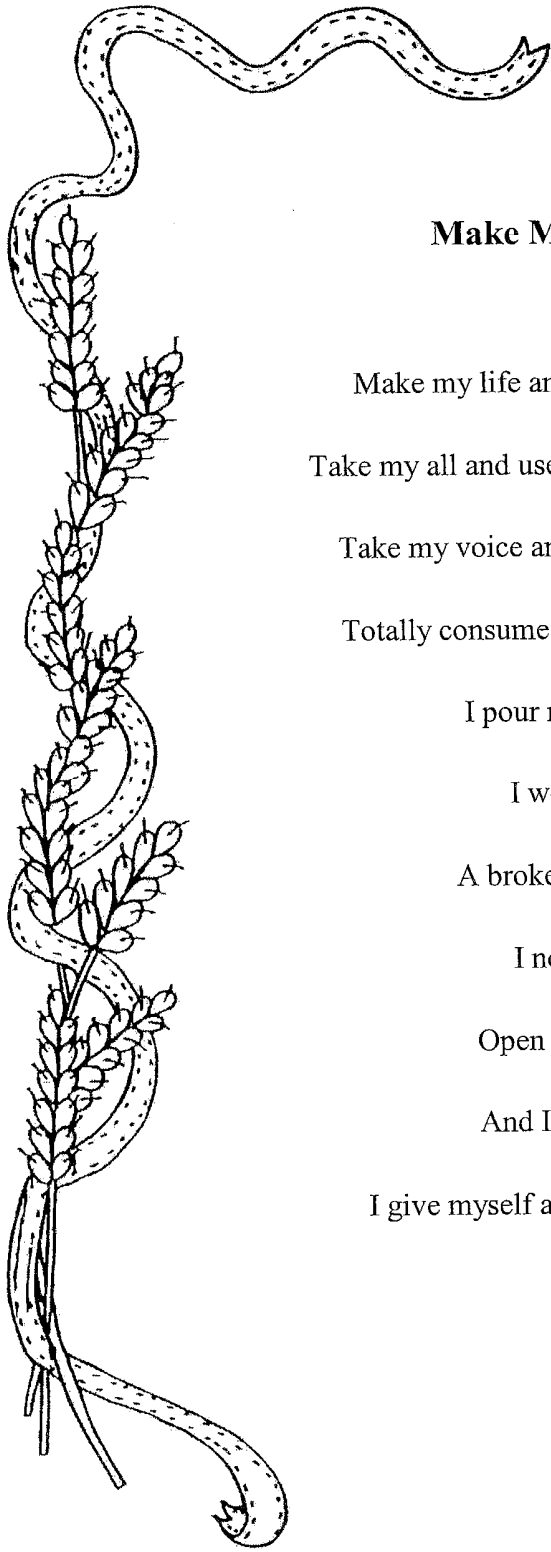
- Seek Christ only, and let *him* decide what he wants to talk to me about, and what *he* wants me to do. ‘... I trust in You, O Lord, I say, You are my God. My times are in Your hand.’
Psalm 31:14–15a (NASB)
- Listen to God’s plans for me and put aside my agenda. I will listen and wait to see what he has in mind. ‘... and the government (of my life) shall be upon his shoulder.’
Isaiah 9:6b (KJV)
- Move forward with what the Lord tells me to do. ‘Enlarge the place of your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; Lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs.’
Isaiah 54:2 (NASB)
- Drop *my* plans. Ask to be yoked with the Lord to plow *his* field and to join him in *his* work. ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.’
Jeremiah 29:11 (NASB)
- Realize that I am helpless without him ... ‘For apart from Me you can do nothing.’
John 15:5 (NASB)

Longer Passages to Go Deeper

Exodus 13:17–14:31; 1 Corinthians 2:6–16

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.



Make My Life An Offering

Make my life an offering of worship unto you.

Take my all and use me, Lord, to magnify your name.

Take my voice and let me sing only for my King.

Totally consume me, Lord, a fragrance unto you.

I pour my heart out unto you,

I worship at your feet.

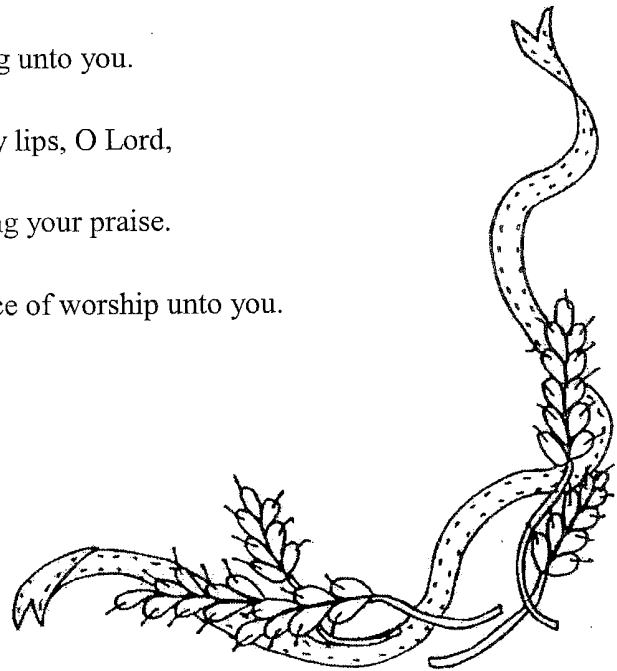
A broken, contrite spirit, Lord,

I now bring unto you.

Open thou my lips, O Lord,

And I will sing your praise.

I give myself a sacrifice of worship unto you.



A Specific Unmet Need? (financial problems, lacking friends, family problems, other)

If I will trust him, he will meet my needs, acting in supernatural ways. He is Jehovah-Rohi, my shepherd.

- In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation. Psalm 5:3 (NIV)
- Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this. Psalm 37:4–5 (NIV)
- ... for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Matthew 6:8b (NIV)
- And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)

Longer Passages to Go Deeper

Psalm 73; Matthew 6:25–34

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

Stop Whining

By J. Lee Grady (2003)

Used with permission.

Anyone who thinks ministry travel is glamorous is welcome to accompany me the next time I go to Nigeria. I spent nine days there in January, and during the trip I came face to face with my spoiled American self. It was not a pretty picture, especially after I learned that my luggage did not arrive with me.

When I complained in a privileged American tone to the uniformed woman at the customs desk, she offered no sympathy. ‘Come back in five days,’ she said.

So there I was in a hot, sweaty country with no deodorant or cologne, one pair of underwear, no contact-lens solution and none of my trendy American clothes. When I arrived at the conference I was attending, my hosts gave me some African outfits (‘colorful pajamas’ is a better way to describe them), along with a pair of sandals. I became an African for a week, eating their food (goat, rice, and fried plantains), enduring daily power outages and sitting in meeting halls that had no air conditioning.

Before the week was over, I had forgotten how badly I was ‘suffering.’ In fact, I didn’t care if I ever saw my suitcase again. I had crucified my whiny selfishness and left it to rot in Africa.

It really wasn’t the missing luggage or the rust-colored bath water that made such an impact on me. It was the brave people I met—the true heroes of the faith who showed me that the selflessness of New Testament Christianity is still alive in the 21st century.

One man named Abu told me that he was beaten by Islamic radicals and left for dead near a campus in northern Nigeria, where an angry mob once burned as many as 300 churches in one weekend. He was revived

after some Christians prayed for him, so he went back to the same spot where he had been preaching and began another sermon—only to be chased out of town by a gang of Muslims who were wielding machetes. Today he sneaks into Nigeria because he is still on a Muslim hit list.

Shaba, another hero of the faith, told me that members of his family tried to kill him last year because he was winning Muslims to Christ. He knew a pastor in the city of Kano who was beheaded a few years ago, but he says he must stay in the north and continue to share his faith in spite of the risks. ‘We need to go back to the book of Acts and stop thinking of ourselves,’ he told me.

A courageous leader named Laide shared that she is covertly sending Nigerian women into Islamic countries in North Africa to intercede and pave the way for evangelism teams. Her prayer group once blocked Libyan Dictator Moammar Gadhafi from coming to Nigeria to fund Islamic terrorists. One morning, Laide and eight of her team leaders laid hands on me and prayed that *Charisma* would carry Nigeria’s revival fire to the United States.

That flame will not be kindled in your life or mine until selfishness has been dethroned. Obedience has nothing to do with comfort or convenience. The crucified life is not a popular concept in today’s prosperity-oriented church, but we’ll never make lasting spiritual impact if we don’t want to embrace suffering and sacrifice.

Maybe we Americans would develop genuine New Testament faith if we lost our luggage more often—and learned to see the world through the eyes of our persecuted brethren.

Struggling with Relinquishment?

I must relinquish all to him—keep my possessive, self-centered hands off and let God do it, or not do it.

- Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord.
Psalm 27:14 (NASB)
- Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in him and he will do it. Psalm 37:5 (NASB)
- The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me ... Psalm 138:8a (NIV)
- This I recall to mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!
Lamentations 3:21–23 (NASB)
- ... may the Lord of peace himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance.
2 Thessalonians 3:16a (NASB)

Longer Passages to Go Deeper

Genesis 22:1–19; Philippians 2:1–11

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

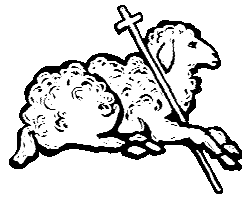


None Other Lamb

None other lamb, none other hope,
None other name in earth nor sea.
None other hiding place from guilt and shame,
None besides thee.

My faith burns low, my hope burns low,
Only my heart's desire cries to thee.
In the loud thunder of my want and woe,
Cries out to thee.

Lord, thou art life, though I be dead.
Love's flame thou art, however could I be.
Nor heaven have I, nor place to lay my head,
No home but thee.



Disappointments, Discouragements, Mistakes, Sins?

O God of the second chance, the One who promises that we can always make a fresh beginning—today, Lord, let me begin. Thank you that your mercies are new every morning.

- Instead of looking at the difficulties, I will look to Jesus, or Satan will discourage me unduly. The temptation is to give up and not trust Jesus.
- I am to lift my hurts, sins, disappointments, shortcomings, mistakes, gaps in service, etc. (the ‘snakes’ in my life) up to him to be redeemed and turned to power—even as God told Moses that the people should take what had bitten them and lift that up to him.
(refer to Numbers 21:4–9)
- I must turn off all negative thoughts about my wrong decisions and actions, and accept fully my situation as it is now. I will trust God to use these things for my spiritual growth and the edification of others. I will trust the Lord to protect and strengthen me against continued problems in similar situations.
- As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:12 (NIV)
- ‘Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,’ says the Lord, who has compassion on you.
Isaiah 54:10 (NIV)
- Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy; to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever.
Jude 24–25 (NASB)

Longer Passages to Go Deeper

Psalms 42 and 43; Galatians 5:13–6:10

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

Changing *Disappointment* to *His Appointment*

Jack W. Hayford (2005)

Used with permission.

How often do you have to change your plans? How many times have you counted on something that seemed sure to happen, and then it didn't? How about those situations when you prayed, waited on God, and gained an inner witness that he would be working to bring everything about—and it appeared he was (just as you had prayed)—then everything collapsed?

When things fall apart and disappointment begins to clutch at your emotions, what can you do? Here are some steps that can help you cope with disappointment.

Use the space after each step for any notes or any word(s) that the Lord speaks to you.

1. Don't Decide, 'Everything is Over!'

Because a glitch gets in your plans—or an absolute barricade or even an 'impossible, unchangeable' circumstance—that does not mean that your life has ended. Our lives are in God's hands no matter what. Jesus said, 'My Father, who has given them (that's us) to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand' (John 10:29). Circumstances never—*never*—change the fundamental and ultimate absolute that undergirds the believer's life: *My life is in God's hands.*

2. Let God's Peace Take Command.

The only thing that ever hinders peace is that someone doesn't surrender. So when you are upset, and dismay, frustration, or deep disappointment comes, 'Let the peace of God rule in your heart' (Colossians 3:15). Surrendering to God is never the same as surrendering to the situation or to whatever works of hell may be afoot. It is *an act of choice* that overrules whatever of chance seems to be trying your soul, stretching your faith, or overthrowing your confidence. Say, 'Lord God Almighty, I give this to you—completely!' *And then, with praise upon praise, leave it there.* 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 4:6–7).

3. Commit to Hope—There’s Reason To!

For many people, hope is a ‘cross your fingers’ kind of thing that is shot through with guesswork. For the believer, hope is being sure about things that aren’t here yet! *Our hope is grounded in unshakable promises.* While I may misunderstand God’s timing and God’s ways, and even wonder about God’s presence, he doesn’t change: ‘It is impossible for God to lie, [thus] we ... have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast’ (Hebrews 6:18–19).

4. Let Go of Any Need to ‘Look Good.’

Much of our disappointment is rooted in our fears, *but the greatest of those liars is the fear that our change in plans or our apparent setback will embarrass us before other people.* Sure, someone may say that you don’t know what you’re doing. And there may be people who question your relationship with God or fly in the face of your disappointment with even more discouraging remarks. But don’t allow the need to appear in perfect control of your life and circumstances put you in the position of trying to justify everything. Don’t mind saying, ‘Maybe I was wrong’—even if you’re sure you weren’t, but you just don’t understand it all yet. ‘The Lord *will* accomplish what concerns me’ (Psalm 138:8a).

5. Praise the Lord—Quietly.

Though we cannot see the way God is going to work in the situation, we can be assured that he *will*. ‘For the mountains shall depart and the hill be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed,’ says the Lord who has mercy on you (Isaiah 54:10).

And God Said ...

I said, '*God, I hurt.*'
And God said,
'I know.'

I said, '*God, I cry a lot.*'
And God said,
'That is why I gave you tears.'

I said, '*God, I am so depressed.*'
And God said,
'That is why I gave you sunshine.'

I said, '*God, life is so hard.*'
And God said,
'That is why I gave you loved ones.'

I said, '*God, my loved one died.*'
And God said,
'So did mine.'

I said, '*God, it is such a loss.*'
And God said,
'I saw mine nailed to a cross.'

I said, '*God, but your loved one lives.*'
And God said,
'So does yours, since he trusted in Christ.'

I said, '*God, where are they now?'*'
And God said,
'Mine is on My right and yours is in the Light.'

I said, '*God, it hurts.*'
And God said,
'I know.'

Posted on the wall at the Oklahoma City bombing site by K.C. and Myke Kuzmic. 1995.

Going Through A Barren Time?

I am not only to bear this dry and barren stretch of my life, but to actually thank God for it and keep on praising him. (from Psalm 103)

- As a Father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.
Psalm 103:13–14 (NIV)
- Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.
Psalm 143:8a (NIV)
- Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ... until you are endued with power from on high.
Luke 24:49 (NKJV)
- I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.
John 10:10b (NKJV)
- Bulbs planted in the fall begin their growth in the cold and dark, in order to bloom in the spring. ‘... unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.’
John 12:24 (NIV)

Longer Passages to Go Deeper

Psalm 130; John 15:1–17

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

I Refuse!

I refuse to be discouraged, to be sad, or to cry;
I refuse to be downhearted, and here's the reason why:
I have a God who is mighty, Who's sovereign and supreme;
I have a God who loves me, and I am on His team.

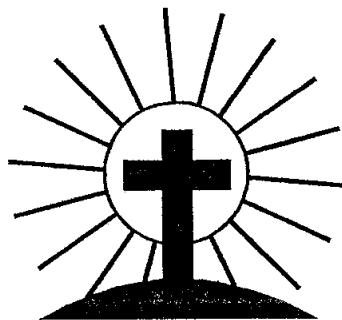
He is all-wise and powerful. Jesus is His name;
Though everything is changeable, my God remains the same.
My God knows all that's happening, the beginning to the end;
His presence is my comfort; He's my dearest Friend.

When sickness comes to weaken me, to bring my head down low,
I call upon my mighty God; into His arms I go.
When circumstances threaten to rob me of my peace,
He draws me close unto His breast where all my strivings cease.

When my heart melts within me, and weakness takes control;
He gathers me into His arms; He soothes my heart and soul.
The great 'I AM' is with me; my life is in His hand.
The Son of God is my hope; it's in His strength I stand.

I refuse to be defeated; my eyes are on my God;
He has promised to be with me, as through this life I trod.
I'm looking past my circumstances to heaven's throne above;
My prayers have reached the heart of God; I'm resting in His love.

I give God thanks in everything; my eyes are on His face;
The battle's His, the victory mine; He'll help me win the race.



Carrying a Heavy Burden or Going Through a Time of Testing?

He will ease and relieve and refresh my soul. And when I enter *his rest*, then *my works* will be put aside.

- I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Psalm 27:13 (NASB)
- 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28–30 (NIV)
- No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)
- ... for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work ... Hebrews 4:10 (NIV)

Longer Passages to Go Deeper

2 Chronicles 20:1–30; Mark 4:35–41

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

The Ant and the Contact Lens

Though God may at times seem distant in our lives, and invisible to us, he is *always there* and is working behind the scenes in ways we don't always recognize. In the midst of circumstances that may have us baffled—when we wonder what we are going to do, or even how we are going to do it, we can rest assured that God's power is at work in our lives.

Let's look at a little story. It's called *The Ant and the Contact Lens*, and it is a true story by Josh and Karen Zarandona.

Brenda was a young woman who was invited to go rock climbing. Although she was very frightened, she went with her group to a tremendously high granite cliff. In spite of her fear, she put on the gear, took hold of the rope, and started up the face of the rock. She got to a ledge where she could take a breather, and as she was standing there, the safety rope snapped against Brenda's eye and knocked out her contact lens.

With her eyesight now blurry, she began to get upset, so she prayed to the Lord to help her find her contact lens. When she got to the top, a friend examined her eye and clothes but the lens was nowhere to be found.

She sat down despondent, waiting for the rest of their party to make it up the face of the cliff, and as she looked out over the range of mountains she thought of the scripture, *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth*. She prayed. 'Lord, you can see all these mountains. You know every stone and leaf, so please help me.'

Finally, the group walked down the trail to the bottom. And there at the bottom was a new party of climbers just starting up the face of the cliff. One of them shouted out, 'Hey, did anybody lose a contact lens?'

Well, that would be startling enough, but do you know why the climber saw it? An ant was moving slowly across the face of the rock, carrying it!

Brenda's father was a cartoonist. When she told him the incredible story of her prayer, the ant, and the contact lens, he drew a picture of an ant lugging the contact lens with the words: '*Lord, I don't know why you want me to carry this thing. I can't even eat it and it is awfully heavy, but if this is what you want me to do, I'll carry it for you.*'

It would probably do us good to at least occasionally say, 'God, I don't know why you want me to carry this load. I see no good in it and it is awfully heavy. *But if you want me to carry it, I will.*'

God doesn't call the qualified. God qualifies the called. All of our actions are interrelated, and God has a *purpose* in all things.



Health Issues?

- I have heard your prayer and have seen your tears; I will heal you.
(the Lord's promise to Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:5)
 - He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Psalm 147:3 (NIV)
 - ... 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.
Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)
 - But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.
Philippians 3:20–21 (NIV)
 - ... Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.'
Mark 2:17a (NIV)
 - Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16 (NIV)
 - Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. 3 John 1:2 (NIV)
- Longer Passages to Go Deeper* Psalm 102; Mark 5:21–43

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

When Healing Doesn't Come: Facing Sickness With Faith

James R. Hall (2004)

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People who live with chronic illness or physical challenges need compassion, not condemnation.

Some folks are born with disabilities; others of us become disabled later in life. In my case, I was almost 40 years old when my life took a surprising and challenging detour into chronic illness and disability.

I had been diagnosed with diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure several years before that time but had enjoyed fairly decent health. Then the bottom started dropping out.

I developed a myriad of complications from the diabetes. A head injury sustained in an accident caused a vision disorder that made it impossible for me to safely drive a car on a highway or interstate. I was diagnosed with primary immune deficiency, a disorder that made me sick with various kinds of viral or bacterial infections almost constantly.

At midlife, I found myself unable to perform a full-time job or even drive myself to the doctor's office. Routine activities that I had taken for granted became major challenges or simply had to be given up. My world became increasingly smaller.

I have always been one to count my blessings, and I have been blessed for 24 years to have as my companion and friend my dear wife, Mary. An inner-city, special-education teacher, Mary had to begin to shoulder much of the load at home (including becoming my 'taxi driver'). Our financial situation began to deteriorate when we were forced to live mostly on her modest salary. This added additional stress to our lives.

Mary and I are blessed to have some good Christian friends who offer much support, encouragement, and also intercessory prayer. These are the believers who realize that a

disabled person needs encouragement and understanding more than anything else.

I wish I could say this has been the case with all of our Christian friends and acquaintances, but then I wouldn't be telling the truth. Others, frankly, have been more a part of the problem than the solution.

As a 'full gospel' believer, I know from the Bible that our God is a healing God. I have many friends who have been miraculously healed of a number of serious diseases and illnesses.

I've learned that God does things His way in His time. I prayed for, and also expected, immediate healing, but for reasons known only to the Lord, it hasn't occurred yet.

I began to identify with the biblical character Job, who learned that it wasn't his job to question God but to trust in His love and wait patiently until His deliverance finally came.

Some of my charismatic friends and acquaintances don't see it quite the same way. They find various ways to let me know they view my illness and disability as being somehow my fault.

I've been told I am 'worse than an infidel' because I am not able to work full time and my wife has become our primary provider. People have said that I must have major unconfessed sin that's keeping me ill or that I must not have enough faith to receive my healing. I've even been reprimanded for not repeating aloud enough Scriptures with sufficient frequency to earn my healing. The list goes on.

Through all of this, I have learned to place

my trust in a God who is *always* faithful and willing to help, even during the darkest hours. Those of us who have chronic health problems and disabilities aren't looking for pity, and we aren't looking for someone to solve all our problems—only God is capable of that.

But, at the very least, we need to know that our brothers and sisters in Christ are praying for us and standing with us as we face

considerable challenges associated with disability and chronic health problems.

Sometimes a compassionate smile and a pat on the back from a Christian brother or sister can be just what the doctor ordered.

James R. Hall is a former newspaper reporter and editor and contributing columnist with the New York Times News Service. He is a freelance writer as well as an ordained pastor and lives with his wife and son in Shelbyville, Indiana.

When Sickness Hits ... TRUST GOD

Chris Maxwell (2004)

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After enduring a painful illness that caused me to lose some of my memory, I had to learn to trust all over again. Here are some steps to take if you are facing physical infirmity.

Trust God. True faith doesn't force change to occur. It believes that God knows best. It allows us to courageously endure. Even in a wheelchair. When we face reality, biblical faith brings victory no matter what the scoreboard says.

Recieve help. When healing doesn't come, allow friends to fulfill their roles as teammates of Christ's body. We aren't called to do it all! We can maintain relationships and launch into new territory when a friend drives us to the doctor or feeds us a meal.

Understand how people might struggle with how we are 'different.' How can we love those trying to like us? It requires inner security and divine love. It is OK for them to resist change. Confess honestly that you also have to fight through it.

Stick to new rules. If I have to use PowerPoint and a Palm Pilot to remember people's names, so what? Thank God for the help. Submitting to what God has given to save our lives helps us reach our potential for *His* glory.

Tell your story. Many people need to learn what you know about recovery and hope. Did you not have enough faith? Why didn't you give up? Announcing God's grace in your trial brings glory to Him and truth to His patients. Tell it!

Give your time and talents to help those in need. To get more out of your battle, give more of yourself away. Use your strengths. Offer gifts, prayers, and smiles. Hold a hand. Believe in a miracle.

Observe the many opportunities that now belong to the new you. Also use your weaknesses: Paul knew what he was writing about. God's strength shows off when we stand on the stage of life to facilitate an audience of broken people

Discharge hurt in healthy ways. Release inner infections of hate and anger. Don't deny them; send them away. Laugh and cry. I often ask persons with illnesses to participate in what I call 'Writing for the Health of It.' Use a journal. Take David's Psalms and make them personal. Your honest writing isn't negative confession. It allows God to turn your mourning into dancing!

Chris Maxwell is pastor of Evangel Assembly of God in Orlando, Florida. He contracted encephalitis in 1996 and has required numerous treatments. He has used his illness to share Christ with dozens of nurses, doctors, and physical therapists.

... the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Philippians 3:20–21
New International Version



Agonizing Over a Family Member or Friend?

- Lord, I commit _____'s way to you. I trust in you to do this.
(from Psalm 37:5)
- Have mercy on _____, O Lord, have mercy on _____.
(from Psalm 57:1)
- Behold, I am the Lord the god of all flesh: Is there anything too hard for me?
Jeremiah 32:27 (KJV)
- In the name of Jesus Christ, I bind _____'s body, soul, and spirit to the will and purposes of God for (his, her) life.
(from Matthew 16:19)
- The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off ... Acts 2:39a (NIV)
- And as Isaiah boldly says, 'I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.'
Romans 10:20, with reference to Isaiah 65:1 (NIV)

Longer Passages to Go Deeper

Jeremiah 32:30–41; John 21:15–23

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

Scripture Prayers

Prayer for Your Family (from Ephesians 3:14–21 NASB)

I bow my knees before you, Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

That you would grant us, according to the riches of your glory, to be strengthened with power through your Spirit in the inner person; so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

And that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Now unto you who are able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us:

To you be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Prayer for An Individual (from Ephesians 1:16–19 NASB)

I do not cease giving thanks for _____, while making mention of _____ in my prayers.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give _____ a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

I pray that the eyes of _____'s heart may be enlightened, so that _____ may know:

- What is the hope of his calling;
- What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; and
- What is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe.

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might.

Prayer for An Individual (from Colossians 1:9–12 NASB)

We have not ceased to pray for _____, and to ask that _____ be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

So that _____ may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience;

Joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Grief or Loss?

Grief and loss are a normal part of life and we will all face them at some point. *At that point* is where he wants to meet us and bring comfort.

- In all their distress he too was distressed ... Isaiah 63:9 (NIV)
- 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. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior ... Isaiah 43:2–3 (NIV)
- ... the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. Isaiah 60:20b (NIV)
- Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer ... lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Psalm 61:1–2 (NIV)
- God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear ... Psalm 46:1–2 (NIV)

Longer Passages to Go Deeper

Psalm 31; John 11:1–44

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

For This I Have Jesus

Many years ago in a small church in Ireland a message was given in which the minister said that Jesus' words 'Abide in me, and I in you,' mean to simply say in every circumstance 'For This I Have Jesus,' and Jesus will say, 'For This You Have Me.'

While he was speaking, a telegram was delivered to the young pianist. It read: 'Mother very ill, take first train home.'

At the conclusion of the message she shared the telegram with the members, and she added: 'I have never traveled alone, but, "For This I Have Jesus." I must take a midnight train, but, "For This I Have Jesus." I must cross the channel and make connections on the other side, but, "For This I Have Jesus." Then I take a long train trip to the south of England, but, "For this, and all the suspense along the way, I have Jesus".' As she spoke these words, those present saw the Light of Heaven upon her face.

Several weeks later a letter from her arrived at the church. It was a song of praise. She wrote. 'As I traveled that long, sorrowful journey, I continued to say, "For This I Have Jesus," and He answered, "For This You Have Me."'

'As I reached home, my sister fell sobbing on my shoulder saying, "Oh, if you had come ten minutes sooner you would have seen Mother who so longed to see you." Instantly I looked up and said, "For This I Have Jesus," and He came between me and my sorrow, and vain regrets had no power over me. We had never had a death or funeral in our family, and they all depended on me for every decision. Acknowledging my ignorance I said softly, "For This I Have Jesus," and He gave me His wisdom for every detail. There was also His perfect peace for all legal matters that needed attention.

'Now life has become joyous and victorious as in every circumstance I continue to say, "For This I Have Jesus".'

Christian Reader: What is the circumstance in your life today that is beyond your control? Is it sorrow, sickness, suffering, loss and grief, fear, unsaved relatives, disappointment, discouragement, guidance, finances, misunderstanding, or another trial? You, also, can look into His face and say, 'For This I Have Jesus,' and He will say, 'For This You Have Me.'

—Petty

'... for the ways of the Lord are right ...'
Hosea 14:9



Another Area of Concern?

Do you have another area of concern, and/or other issues that you need to bring before the Lord? If so, please list below.

- You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock. Isaiah 26:3–4 (NLT)
 - So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)
 - Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:1, 27 (NIV)
 - Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. 1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)
- Longer Passages to Go Deeper* Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 4:4–9; Hebrews 13:20–21

Questions for Reflection

Refer to the questions on page 5, and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) you should try to answer.

I'm Taking A Vacation From Worry

I've packed my bags;
I'm leaving today!

I'm taking all my dreams and
all my hare-brained schemes;

I've booked my passage
first-class all the way.

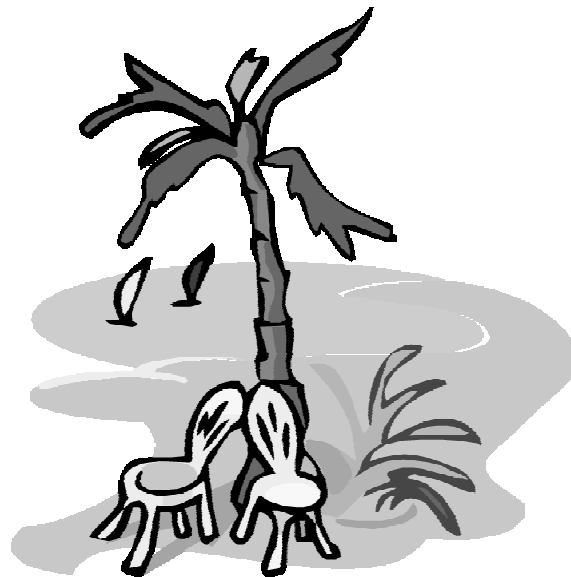
I'm going half-a-million miles
from all my troubles—

From every anxious thought
and fretful care.

I'm taking a vacation from worry!
O, won't you come and join me there?

(read Philippians 4:6–7)

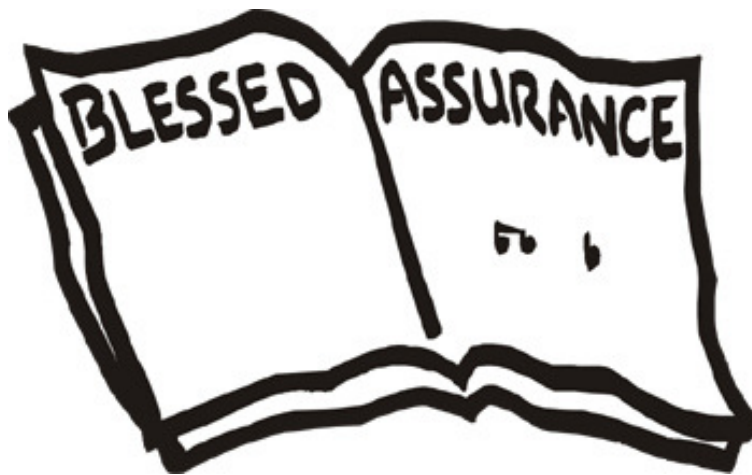
—Barbara Colborn, 1995
Reflection and Prayer Training
October, 2004



**Commit your way to the Lord; trust also
in him and he will do it.**

Psalm 37:5

New American Standard Bible



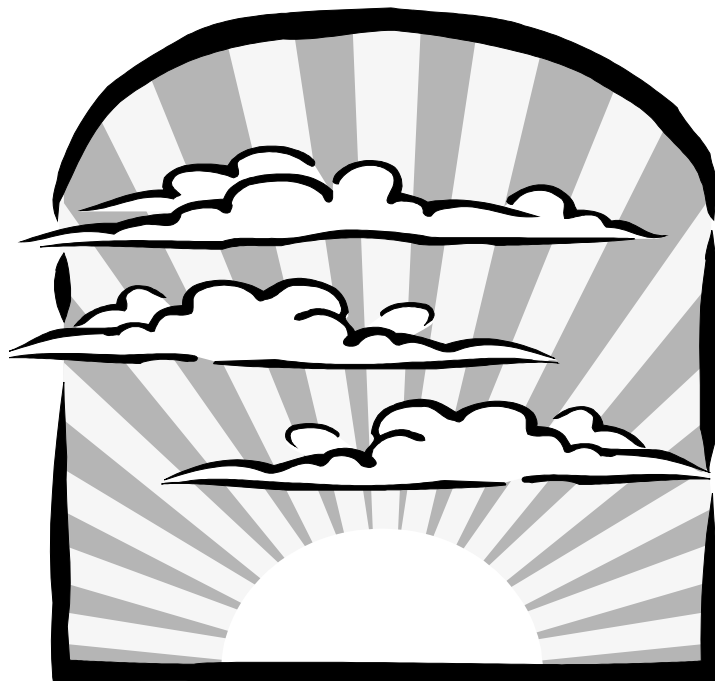
An Incredible Story, Monthly Praise, Prayer Assurance, Articles, and An Intercessor

‘An Incredible Story’ by Bill Bright (from the Internet)	33
‘A Month of Praise’ by Bob Hostetler (2006)	34
‘Eight Reasons We Can Stand Confidently Before God in Prayer’ Adapted from the Jericho Walls prayer network website by Bob Mostert (2004)	37
‘Don’t Hold On To Your Hurts’ by R. T. Kendall (2003).....	39
‘Standing with the Desolate’ by Ziya Meral (2009)	44
‘Clinging to God in the Darkness’ by Tricia McCary Rhodes (2005).....	47
<i>An Intercessor:</i> ‘George Müller: Faith in God’s Provision’ by Albert Lemmons (2004)	50

‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unreachable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!’

Romans 11:33

King James Version



An Incredible Story

Bill Bright (from the Internet)

In the public domain.

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results (James 5:16, NLT).

Dear Friends:

In the 1930s, Stalin ordered a purge of all Bibles and all believers in the former Soviet Union. Millions of Bibles were confiscated and multitudes of believers were sent to the gulags (prison camps), where most died for being ‘enemies of the state.’ In Stavropol, Russia, this order was carried out with a vengeance.

Recently, the CoMission ministry, which Campus Crusade for Christ sponsored, sent a team to Stavropol. The city’s history was not known at that time. But when our team was having difficulties getting Bibles shipped from Moscow, someone mentioned the existence of a warehouse outside of town where these confiscated Bibles had been stored ever since Stalin’s day. After much prayer by the team, one member finally got up the courage to go to the warehouse and ask the officials if the Bibles were still there. Sure enough, they were. Then the CoMission asked if the Bibles could be removed and distributed again to the people of Stavropol. The answer was ‘yes’!

The next day the CoMission team returned with a truck and several Russian people to help load the Bibles. One helper was a young man, who was a skeptical, hostile, and agnostic collegian who had come only for the day’s wages.

As they were loading the Bibles, one team member noticed that the young man had disappeared. Eventually, they found him in a corner of the warehouse weeping.

He had slipped away hoping to quietly take a Bible. What he found shook him to the core. The inside page of the Bible he picked up had the handwritten signature of his own grandmother! It had been her Bible! Out of the many thousands of Bibles still left in that warehouse, he stole the one belonging to his grandmother—a woman persecuted for her faith all her life.

No wonder he was weeping—God had just dramatically revealed Himself to this young man. His grandmother had no doubt prayed for him and for her city. Her prayer had followed him and now this young man’s life has been transformed by the very Bible that his grandmother found so dear.

‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unreachable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!’ (Romans 11:33, KJV).

Yours for fulfilling the Great Commission each year until our Lord returns,

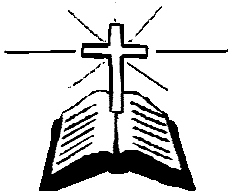
Bill Bright
Campus Crusade for Christ



A Month of Praise

Bob Hostetler (2006)

Used with permission.

<p>1 God the Creator. Creator God, I praise You because You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship You. (Nehemiah 9:6)</p>	<p>6 God of Justice. Lord, I magnify You, because You are just, and You justify those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)</p>	<p>11 Eternal, Saving God. I give praise to You, Father, the only God and Savior. To You be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. (Jude 25)</p>
<p>2 The Only God. God, I praise You because You alone are Lord, and there is no other. Apart from You there is no God. (Isaiah 45:5)</p>	<p>7 Forever Faithful. Heavenly Father, I give You my adoration because You are a faithful God, keeping Your covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love you and keep Your commands. (Deuteronomy 7:9)</p>	<p>12 Holy One. Holy, holy, holy are You, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. (Revelation 4:8)</p>
<p>3 Almighty God. O Lord God Almighty, who is like You? You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you. (Psalm 89:8)</p>	<p>8 God of Mercy. You are a gracious and merciful God, and I praise You for your great mercy. (Nehemiah 9:31)</p>	<p>13 A Personal God. I praise You, God, because You are a personal God who gives me the honor of knowing You, even inviting me to feast at Your kingdom's table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Matthew 8:11)</p>
<p>4 Everlasting Father, the Ancient of Days. I praise You, Lord, as the Ancient of Days, the Everlasting Father who lives forever and ever. (Daniel 7:9, Isaiah 9:6)</p>	<p>9 God, My Rock and My Refuge. I praise You, Lord, for You are my mighty rock, my refuge. (Psalm 62:7)</p>	<p>14 Generous and Giving God. All praise and honor be Yours, O God, because You are a generous God who did not even stop short of giving Your own Son. (John 3:16)</p>
<p>5 The God Who Loves. I praise You because You are a loving God, whose very nature is love. (1 John 4:16)</p>	<p>10 My Patient, Persevering God. Father, I praise You because You are patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but wanting everyone to come to repentance. Thank You for Your patience with me. (2 Peter 3:9)</p>	

<p>15 God, My Provider. I praise You today, Lord, as my Jehovah-Jireh (The Lord Will Provide) who makes all grace abound to me and generously provides all I need. (Genesis 22:14, 2 Corinthians 9:8)</p>	<p>20 God of All Comfort. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. (2 Corinthians 1:3)</p>	<p>26 God, My Liberator. I will praise You because You are my help and my deliverer. (Psalm 70:5)</p>
<p>16 God, My Shepherd. I bless Your name and praise You as my Jehovah-Rohi (The Lord My Shepherd), who will shepherd me and guide me in the paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. (Psalm 23:1-3)</p>	<p>21 God of Miracles. Lord, I praise You because You perform miracles and display Your power among the peoples. (Psalm 77:14)</p>	<p>27 Lifter of My Head. Father God, I praise You because You are a shield around me. You bestow glory on me and lift up my head when I am weary or despised. (Psalm 3:3)</p>
<p>17 God, My Victory. Praise to You, my God, because You are my Jehovah-Nissi (The Lord My Banner), my victory, who always leads me in triumphal procession in Christ. (Exodus 17:15, 2 Corinthians 2:14)</p>	<p>22 The Forgiving God. I want to bless You with praise, Father, because You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love. (Exodus 34:6-7)</p>	<p>28 God of Light. I praise You, Lord, because You are my light and my salvation. You know what lies in darkness, and light dwells with You. (Psalm 27:1, Daniel 2:22)</p>
<p>18 God, My Peace. I praise You with all my heart, Lord, because You are my Jehovah-Shalom (The Lord Our Peace), the God of peace who will soon crush Satan under my feet. (Judges 6:24, Romans 16:20)</p>	<p>23 My Burden Bearer. Praise be to the Lord, to God my Savior, who daily bears my burdens. (Psalm 68:19)</p>	<p>29 God of Joy. I give You praise, O Lord, because You have granted me eternal blessings and have made me glad with the joy of Your presence. (Psalm 21:6)</p>
<p>19 God, My Healer. Father, I praise You because You are Jehovah-Rapha (The Lord Who Heals Me). (Exodus 15:26)</p>	<p>24 A Faithful God. I praise You because Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the skies; great is Your faithfulness. (Psalm 36:5, Lamentations 3:23)</p>	<p>30 God Who Answers Prayer. I praise and honor You, Father, because You are a God who loves to answer prayer and who begins to answer even as I pray. (Isaiah 65:24)</p>
	<p>25 King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All honor and praise be to You, my God, the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light. (1 Timothy 6:15-16)</p>	<p>31 God of All the Earth. I praise and adore You, Lord, as the Holy One of Israel, my Redeemer, the God of all the earth. (Isaiah 54:5)</p>



Eight Reasons We Can Stand Confidently Before God in Prayer

Adapted from the Jericho Walls prayer network website—www.nupsa.org.za.
Bob Mostert (2004)

Used with permission.

1. God's Invitation. 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know' (Jeremiah 33:3).

'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened' (Matthew 7:7–8).

2. Jesus' Blood-Sacrifice. 'Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith' (Hebrews 10:19–22).

3. Jesus' Intercession. 'For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence' (Hebrews 9:24; see also Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34).

4. God's Promises. 'For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm

in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come' (2 Corinthians 1:20–22).

5. God's Oath and Covenant. 'Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.' (Hebrews 6:17–19; see also Hebrews 8:10).

6. God's Character. 'God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?' (Numbers 23:19).

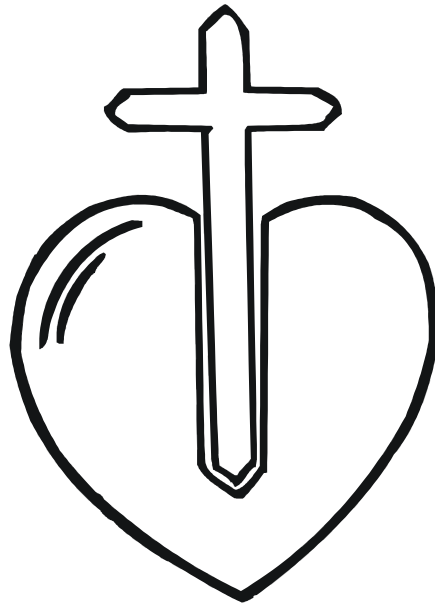
7. Our Priestly Role. '[Jesus] has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father' (Revelation 1:6).

8. The Name of Jesus. 'And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it' (John 14:13–14).



**Bear with each other and forgive
whatever grievances you may have
against one another. Forgive as
the Lord forgave you.**

Colossians 3:13
New International Version



Don't Hold On To Your Hurts

R. T. Kendall (2003)

Used with permission.

All of us have been wounded at some time in our lives, many of us deeply. And it's not something to take lightly. People experience real pain when they or those they love are hurt by another person. Yet we know that the Bible commands us to forgive—and that extending total forgiveness to our offenders is the only way we will ever find true freedom and release.

Certainly if our offenders would put on sackcloth and ashes as a show of repentance, it would be much easier to forgive them. But remember, at the foot of Jesus' cross no one seemed very sorry. There was no justice at His 'trial'—if you could even call it that. A perverse glee filled the faces of the people who demanded His death: 'Crucify him!' they shouted (Mark 15:13, NKJV). Furthermore, 'those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"' (Vv. 29–30).

What was Jesus' response? 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do' (Luke 23:34).

This must be our response as well. Jesus could have said, 'I forgive you.' But such words might have been misinterpreted and wasted, like casting His pearls before swine (see Matthew 7:6). Instead Jesus asked the Father to forgive them, a far more grand gesture.

Asking the Father to forgive them showed not only that Jesus Himself had forgiven them and released them from their guilt but also that He wanted His Father to refrain from punishing them. It was not just a perfunctory prayer; Jesus meant it. And it was gloriously answered! These offenders were among those who were converted after Peter's address on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:14–41).

God has given us a mandate in His word regarding forgiveness: 'Be kind to one another, even as God in Christ forgave you' (Ephesians 4:32). *'Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you' (Colossians 3:13, NIV).*

It's not a suggestion. We must totally forgive those who hurt us.

Totally forgiving someone doesn't necessarily mean you will want to spend your vacation with him or her, but it does mean that you release the bitterness in your heart about what the person has done. We can take our example from the way God treats us.

How does He forgive? Unequivocally and unconditionally. He never holds our sins, which are many, against us or tells others what we did. In practical terms, total forgiveness encompasses all of the following aspects:

1. Being aware of what someone has done, and still forgiving. Total forgiveness is not being oblivious to what an offender did; it is not covering up, excusing, or refusing to acknowledge what happened. Total forgiveness is achieved only when we acknowledge what was done without any denial or covering up—and still refuse to make the offender pay for his crime.

Total forgiveness is painful. It hurts when we kiss revenge goodbye. It hurts to think that the person is getting away with what he did and nobody else will ever find out. But when we are able to fully acknowledge what he did and still desire in our hearts that God bless him in spite of his wrong, we cross over into a supernatural realm. We begin to be a little more like Jesus; we begin to change into the image of Christ.

2. **Choosing to keep no records of wrong.** The Bible says that *love 'keeps no record of wrongs' (1 Corinthians 13:5)*. Love is a choice. Total forgiveness is a choice. It is not a feeling—at least at first—but an act of the will. It is the choice to tear up the record of wrongs we have been keeping.

We clearly see and acknowledge the evil that was done to us, but we erase it—or destroy the record—before it becomes lodged in our hearts. This way resentment does not have a chance to grow.

We must learn to erase the wrong rather than file it away in our mental computer. When we do this all the time—as a lifestyle—we not only avoid bitterness, but we also eventually experience total forgiveness as a feeling—and it is a good feeling.

3. **Refusing to punish.** Refusing to punish those who deserve it—giving up the natural desire to see them 'get what's coming to them'—is the essence of total forgiveness.

Our human nature cannot bear the thought that someone who hurt us would get away with what he has done. It seems so unfair! We want vengeance. But vindication is God's prerogative alone. In Deuteronomy 32:35 He tells us very clearly, 'Vengeance is Mine, and recompense' (NKJV).

4. **Not telling what they did.** There is often a need to talk with someone about how you have been hurt, and this can be therapeutic if it is done with the right heart attitude. But if sharing is necessary, choose the person you tell very carefully, making sure that person is trustworthy and will never repeat your situation to those it does not concern.

Anyone who truly forgives, however, does not gossip about his offender. Talking about how you have been

wounded with the purpose of hurting your enemy's reputation or credibility is a form of punishing him. We divulge what that person did, so others will think less of him.



Our human nature cannot bear the thought that someone who hurt us would get away with what he has done.



When I recall that total forgiveness is forgiving others as I have been forgiven, I remember:

- I won't be punished for my sins.
 - Nobody will know about my sins, for no sins that are under the blood of Christ will be exposed or held against me.
5. **Being merciful.** When it comes to being merciful, this is our Lord's command: 'Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful' (Luke 6:36). In the Greek language, mercy is the opposite of wrath or justice. One difference between grace and mercy is that grace is getting what we don't deserve (favor), and mercy is not getting what we do deserve (justice). So when we show mercy we are withholding justice from those who have injured us, and that is one aspect of godliness.
- There is a fringe benefit for those of us who show mercy: We will also be shown mercy (see Matthew 5:7). This shows that total forgiveness is not devoid of self-interest. 'The merciful man does good for his own soul' (Proverbs 11:17).
6. **Showing graciousness.** True forgiveness shows grace and mercy at the same time. There is an interesting Greek word,

epieikes, that means ‘forbearance’ or ‘tolerance.’ In Philippians 4:5 this word is translated ‘gentleness.’

It comes down to our English word ‘graciousness.’ It implies an exceedingly rare act of grace. It cuts right across a legalistic spirit, which is what comes naturally to most of us. This concept is quite threatening to those of us who think that being inflexible for the truth is the ultimate virtue.

Graciousness is withholding certain facts you know to be true in order to leave even your enemy’s reputation unscathed. Graciousness is shown by what you *don’t* say, even if what you could say would be true.

Self-righteous people find it almost impossible to be gracious; they claim always to be after ‘the truth,’ no matter the cost. Total forgiveness sometimes means overlooking what you perceive to be the truth and not letting on about anything that could damage another person.

- 7. Letting it start in your heart.** Total forgiveness must take place in the heart or it is worthless, for ‘out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks’ (Matthew 12:34). If we have not truly forgiven those who hurt us, it will come out—sooner or later. But if it has indeed taken place in the heart, our words will show it. When there is bitterness, it will eventually manifest itself; when there is love, there is ‘no cause for stumbling’ (1 John 2:10).

Because forgiveness takes place in the heart, reconciliation is not a necessary prerequisite. Those who believe they are not required to forgive until their offender has first repented and been reconciled to them are not following Jesus’ example on the cross. If He had waited until His enemies felt some guilt

or shame for their words and actions, He never would have forgiven them.

- 8. Relinquishing bitterness.** Bitterness is an excessive desire for vengeance that comes from deep resentment. It heads the list of things that grieve the Spirit of God (see Ephesians 4:30-32). And it is one of the most frequent causes of our missing the grace of God. ‘[Look] carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled’ (Hebrews 12:15).

We must, therefore, begin to get rid of a bitter and unforgiving spirit; otherwise, the attempt to forgive will surely fail. Relinquishing bitterness is an open invitation for the Holy Spirit to give you His peace, His joy, and the knowledge of His will.

This is extremely important when it comes to the matter of reconciliation. If I have totally forgiven a person who has hurt me, I will have no bitterness, and I should not feel the slightest bit of guilt or shame for still not wanting a complete restoration of that relationship.

Even if there never had been a friendship in the first place, if someone has greatly wronged me, I can forgive him and yet see it as totally reasonable not to invite him to lunch every Sunday.

How can we be sure that there is no bitterness left in our hearts? Bitterness is gone when there is no desire to get even or punish the offender, when I do or say nothing that would hurt his reputation or future, and when I truly wish him well in all he seeks to do.

- 9. Forgiving God.** Although we often do not see it at first, all of our bitterness is ultimately traceable to a resentment of God. Why? Because deep in our hearts we believe He is the one who allowed bad things to happen.

Only a fool would claim to know the full answer to the question, ‘Why does God allow evil and suffering to continue when He has the power to stop it?’

But there is a partial answer: He does so in order that we may believe. There would be no need for faith if we knew the answer about the origin of evil and the reason for suffering. I know only that it is what makes faith possible.

God can turn evil into blessing. He causes things to work together for good. God did not send His Son into the world to explain evil but rather to save us from it and to exemplify a life of suffering. Jesus suffered as no one else has or ever will.

One day God will clear His own name from the charge of being unjust, but in the meantime, we need to trust Him and take Him at His Word that He is just and merciful.

If we will patiently wait for God’s purposes to be fulfilled, in the end—this is a guarantee—we will say that He has done all things well, even in what He

permitted. He was never guilty in the first place, but because He sometimes appears to us to have been unfair, we must relinquish our bitterness and wholly forgive Him.

10. Forgiving ourselves. There is no lasting joy in forgiveness if it doesn’t include forgiving ourselves. It is as wrong as not forgiving others because God loves us just as much as He loves His other children, and He is just as unhappy when we don’t forgive ourselves as He is when we hold a grudge against others.

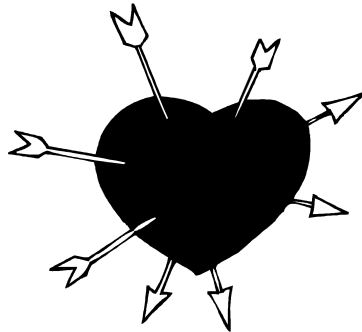
Put simply, we matter to God. He wants our lives to be filled with joy. That’s why He commands us to forgive even ourselves.

Total forgiveness does bring such joy and satisfaction that I am almost tempted to call it a selfish enterprise. In fact, studies show that the first person to experience delight when forgiveness takes place is the one who forgives.

So, for your own sake, obey God. Let go of your hurts by forgiving—totally—those who have wounded you

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R. T. Kendall pastored Westminster Chapel in London for 25 years. He is the author of more than 30 books, including *The Word and the Spirit*, *The Sensitivity of the Spirit* and *Total Forgiveness*, all from Charisma House.



(Love) does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

*1 Corinthians 13:5
New Living Translation*



Standing with the Desolate

Ziya Meral (2009)

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The anguish of working for those who suffer for their faith.

On nights like this one, when I find myself enveloped in alien darkness in an alien hotel room in a faraway land, I hear crying that the silence carries. The faces of all the people I know who are suffering in this country float before me in the stuffy air. As I try to make sense of the day, I flip through graphic pictures of kidnapped and tortured monks from a desert monastery I visited this morning.

As a human-rights advocate and researcher, I travel to people who are persecuted for their religion or ethnicity. I love traveling to distant lands, but I also dread the visits—there is a significant difference between going as a tourist and going as a researcher. I feel drained, as I do every time I come here.

A Muslim-background Christian, I have often found myself believing we are each alone. That's why I knock on all the doors of politicians, diplomats, and international bodies when I find out others are in danger because of their beliefs.

I still vividly remember the look on a church leader's face in Tehran as he told me, 'I know that I am completely alone. Anyone can attack or arrest me. Anything can happen, and nobody will run to help me.'

I know that feeling all too well.

When I received news in August 2008 that two Muslim-background Christians in Iran faced the death penalty for apostasy, I closed my eyes and thought of all the great people I knew in that land. Alongside another Christian in prison, I looked at the pictures of the men awaiting their verdict, to make sure I didn't lose sight of what I was doing and what was at stake.

As I set out to raise their cases, I also spoke for Baha'is in Iran, who have suffered much more than Christians have since the 1979 revolution. All seven leaders of the Baha'i national coordinating committee remain in the notorious Evin prison, simply because they are Baha'i.

Last autumn, as the international community started reacting to the apostasy cases, I received the good news that the three Christians had been released. I rejoiced solemnly, as safety is a long way off for others like them; the Iranian Parliament is working on a new law that would mandate the death penalty for those who leave Islam. With every e-mail and every phone conversation, I pray that this will not happen.

A long time ago, I stopped asking where God was in the midst of torture, indefinite detention, isolation, ostracism, and the denial of social and economic opportunities. He was with those whose dignity had been taken away. He was present in their suffering, and their sufferings were his.

The question was, where were we who were called to share their pain, to give food and water to Christ's thirsty and hungry representatives, and to comfort them during their ordeal?

So, even though every now and then I wonder how I end up in random places and difficult situations, I know why I am there. I am there as a response to an ethical imperative to love my neighbor as myself.

When Nietzsche said that he who has a 'why' to live for can bear almost any 'how,' he was only partially right. A profound sense of small-

ness always haunts us in the face of giant ills, and the emotional effects of seeing the dark side of humanity up-close and personal every day are often quite disempowering.

This brings a constant internal clash. On some levels, we continue to stand firm and speak courageously; at the same time, we want to run away from all of it, away from traumas and conflicts, to find inner peace.

Whenever I find myself in such a dilemma, I start reciting Dietrich Bonhoeffer's poem 'Who Am I?' He wrote it while in prison for standing against the Nazi machine; it reflects my struggle also. From outside, Bonhoeffer was a brave man fighting a dark evil, and everyone sees him as an unshaken hero. Yet when he reflected on his state of heart, he realized how fearful and weak he was.

I remind myself of a few sanity-saving truths. I say out loud, 'I am not Jack Bauer.' Unlike him, I am quite human, and there is a serious limit to what I can achieve. Most things that I confront were here before I arrived, unfold beyond my reach, and will remain long after I leave.

I only stand in *one* corner contributing to the solution of *one* problem. The global rips that I confront locally are too big for any patch I can offer. I rest assured every night that, as I fulfill my role in the body of Christ, others are fulfilling theirs. Even if they fall through, I will do what I have been called to.

With that acceptance of my limitations, I remind myself of another important truth: Jesus Christ is the perfect Son of God, and I am only a fallen son, loved and called by grace. There is a limit to how much I can love

and care, to how far I can go in following God's heart for the broken. I often stare into the cup that has been presented to me with great discomfort, but unlike Christ, I often do not submit to the will of the one asking me to walk on. Christ remains Christ, and I, only myself.

Whenever I look into the eyes of people who suffer and I have the privilege to be welcomed into their most intimate hurts, I know all too well that there is no quick fix for their afflictions. No smart line from a pop-psychology book can ease their continual pain.

In such moments, God often reminds me to shut up and simply be present. I stand as desolate as they, and choose to stay awake in their Gethsemane, hold their hands, pray, and cry with them.

Sharing in their pain, even if it is for a moment, gives me the urge to shout from rooftops in order to bring to light what has been kept in darkness, to voice what has been muted, to disgrace what is shameful, and to remind others of what was left to oblivion. This I do shamelessly, often with tears and anger. Yes, I do cry, even though it is a shame for a Middle Eastern man to do so.

Though I am deeply shaken by my calling, I am also determined. As I put down the photos and close my eyes in the hotel room, I long for God's comfort and human friendship, security, and love.

I also laugh, endlessly. I laugh at the absurdity of the rulers and secret police officers and their self-importance. They are neither the final word nor unshakeable sources of power.

Ziya Meral is a research and advocacy officer for the British human-rights organization Christian Solidarity Worldwide. Get a free downloadable Bible study for this article. Visit ChristianTodayStore.com and use coupon code 'CTmar2009' at checkout.

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

John 12:24

New International Version



Clinging to God in the Darkness

Tricia McCary Rhodes (2005)

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I can't tell you exactly when God disappeared—I only recall a gradual awareness of something missing, an inexplicable loneliness of soul. If someone had suggested then that this bleak season would last over two years, I might have despaired.

Of course He hadn't really left. The great I AM is present always and everywhere, and He could never forsake one of His own. Yet, this I know: one day the lover of my soul simply went into hiding. For over 30 years I had walked in growing intimacy with the Lord, each day our communion becoming more precious to me. Jesus was my Lord, but also my friend. I loved talking with Him and having His voice to guide me. Yes, there had been periods of dryness and episodes of doubt over the years. But I'd never experienced a sense of abandonment like this.

I assumed it would soon pass. I read the Word daily and waited for God to reveal something. Was there some sin I hadn't dealt with? Had my heart been hardened, causing me to go my own way in some area? Had I grieved the Holy Spirit or quenched His presence? It was a purifying time as I pressed into the Scriptures, longing for greater holiness.

But still God seemed silent, His presence far from me. Months went by, and as it became clear that this was not a result of disobedience on my part, I realized that I had entered what saints of old called the 'dark night of the soul.'

John of the Cross, a 16th century believer, coined this term to describe a unique kind of spiritual suffering. Distinct from the pain God's children feel when their fellowship with Him is broken because of sin, this sense of darkness seems actually to be inflicted by

God in order to do a deeper work in those who long for more of Him. By stripping us of things we've come to rely upon—even good things like answers to prayer, or feelings of joy, or experiences of His presence—God brings us to a new place where we know and love Him for *who* He is alone.

Throughout the centuries, countless believers have written about such times in their lives. Though Scripture does not offer concise teaching on it, we see examples in the Bible of those who seemed to have experienced a dark night of the soul. Job cried out, 'Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy?' (Job 13:24). David offered many such poignant pleas: 'Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?' (Psalm 88:14). 'How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?' (Psalm 13:1–2). These passages became a balm to my restless spirit during my lengthy sojourn with a hidden God.

An Untapped Reservoir

Yet how do you pray when the heavens are silent, when you go to the fountain only to find that it seems to have dried up? Prayer through the dark night is unlike any other kind; by necessity, it draws upon some untapped reservoir of raw faith.

I often felt ill equipped for the desolation that assaulted me. The stark silence screamed with questions as I wandered about in the wee hours of the night praying and waiting for answers that didn't come. At times it felt as if the more I prayed the worse things got. A friend I'd thought was so close to belief rejected Christ defiantly. Our church, for which I'd prayed for years to see revival, endured a devastating split instead.

When I would ponder what I knew of God's character, however, I would become increasingly convinced that if He was good before, He must still be good. His Word still promised that He would give me new mercies every morning, regardless of how I might feel or what I might see.

In those days I devoured the story of the importunate widow (Luke 18:1–8) and I imagined Jesus saying to me, 'I told this story for times like these, so that you would keep praying and not lose heart.' Prayer was indeed survival for me, but in an odd way—in spurts and in groans without words. It often felt aimless. At times I'd mouth just one word: a name, a situation, or a place. Sometimes all I could do was cry out, *Oh Lord!* trusting that God did not require eloquence to know what was in my heart.

I continued to grasp for truth in Scripture. When I found it, I chewed it like a cow chews its cud. When my head hit the pillow each night, I made a game of listing God's attributes alphabetically. Alpha, Bountiful, Creator, Deliverer ... if I got to Z and sleep still eluded me, I'd begin again.

Giving thanks rescued me from mornings of dryness. I'd look around my house and list what I could be thankful for: a roof over our heads, furniture, clothing, family, freedom, a comfortable bed, food, and a kitchen to cook it in. I'd look out the window and add more: the sun that appeared on the horizon each morning, the trees, flowers, and singing birds. At the end of my list, I always added my painful circumstances and the wilderness my world had become.

How can I explain what it was like to pray during this time? What else was there to do but to keep coming to Him, crying out, asking, seeking, knocking? I didn't have to grit my teeth, and I didn't pray through sheer force of will—this was the mystery. It can only have been *grace*—God's enabling power sustaining and directing in ways that I did not understand until later.

Joy in the Morning

My dark night ended several months ago. The Lord returned much the same way that He had gone, bringing an increasing consciousness that He was with me once again. In worship I would suddenly just *know* that God was there, delighting in my offering. His Word began to leap off the page once again. A nephew I'd prayed for was miraculously saved. New life seeped into our church gatherings. With each manifestation of Christ's presence in my life, my hope increased. I hadn't done anything to end the dark night. I believe that God simply had accomplished the work He set out to do.

Weeks after the dark night ended, as I prayed and pondered all I'd been through, something began to bubble up from deep within, flooding my soul with joy. It was simply this: God had been there in every moment of silence and obscurity, giving me not what I wanted, but exactly what I needed.

Some do say that every believer who is committed to growing in Christ will one day face a season when God will hide Himself. I don't know if this is true, but Jesus did teach *that unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it cannot produce more* (John 12:24). Perhaps the dark night is like what happens to that fallen seed: God works to crucify our flesh and purify our desires. Into that place of pain, He calls to us: 'Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God' (Isaiah 50:10).

If you ever feel a dark night of the soul closing in, try not to despair. I want to be a voice of hope that it will all be worth it, because He is a trustworthy God. Something inside of me now does resonate with an assurance, a joyful hope, that He is working. No matter what I feel or see, I know He is answering my every prayer in ways above and beyond what I can imagine. This faith

I've been given feels unshakable, able to withstand the tempestuous tides of life that are sure to come.

My relationship with God now sparkles with facets previously unseen. The work He did went deep, sweeping away debris in my soul that had hindered a purer vision of His value. I know now that whether or not He ever answers another prayer or manifests His sweet presence to me, He is worthy of my worship. My love for Him is limited less and less by my expectations of what He ought to do for me or how He should fulfill His purposes. I better understand that for the rest of my life, He must increase and I must decrease, for He alone is God.

A year and a half ago, raging fires destroyed hundreds of the homes in our area. In the aftermath, many have chosen to speak of what they learned through the loss—of the things that matter far more than what was taken from them, like the love of a family and the compassion of a community. This is how I feel about my dark night of the soul. When

I was in the full force of its fiery destruction, I only wanted it to end. But now I have a perspective that could only have been gained through that loss. I can see what really matters—and what doesn't. I cannot explain it, and I never saw it coming. But the truth is that Christ in His absence became more precious to me than He was even in His flourishing presence.

I know now that for every dark night, a glorious dawn awaits. Wherever you may be in your spiritual journey, I pray that this truth will encourage you to reach for all God is, regardless of the cost. He will not hide Himself from you even one minute beyond His sovereign plan. He holds you, even when you feel completely deserted, and He's shedding His love into your heart. *Cling to Him through the darkness.* The trials that overwhelm right now will one day appear as memorial stones—monuments that testify to His great love and power to redeem. This is the legacy of the soul's dark night.

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Tricia McCary Rhodes is author of *The Soul at Rest: A Journey into Contemplative Prayer*. On her days off, Tricia likes to go to the beach and read or hang out with her husband.



George Müller: Faith in God's Provision

Albert Lemmons (2004)

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If we were to take a *quantitative* look at the life and ministry of George Müller, this is what we'd see: 64 years of ministry; 10,000 orphans cared for (2,566 who are said to have trusted in Christ before leaving Müller's orphanages); millions of tracts and Bibles were printed and distributed; 189 foreign missionaries were supported; 9,000 students were provided for; 63 missionaries were sent out. Very impressive, to be sure. But then, consider this: All this work was financed with funds provided by God, as they were needed, in response to Müller's mountain-moving faith and unceasing prayer.

George Müller (1805-1898) 'was driven not only from motives of benevolence, but from a desire to convince men that God was a living God, as ready now as ever to answer prayer, and that in the discharge of any duty to which he calls us, we may implicitly rely entirely upon his all-sufficient aid in every emergency' (*The Life of Trust*, by Francis Wayland). Born in Germany, but later becoming a British subject, Müller began his ministry in London. When ill health forced him to leave the city, he went to Teignmouth and began to preach to the local community. There, he did away with the custom of pew rents, took no salary, and supported himself and his ministry only with offerings from his followers.

Two years later, Müller moved to Bristol and devoted his life to caring for orphaned children—relying only on contributions from followers and the community. Many nights, his wife was awakened by the sound of George talking to the Father.

Often, God's answer came while Müller was still on his knees. One such night, as he prayed about the needs of the orphans, a bakery owner across town could not sleep.

The bakery owner, who knew nothing of Müller's prayers, eventually felt compelled to get up, call an employee, and ask him to go to the shop and bake a day's bread for the orphans. Then, on second thought, he told the employee, 'Bake enough for a month so I can get some sleep.'

George Müller lived by the rule that 'no emergency is unforeseen and no want is unprovided for by God.' Imagine Müller's thankfulness—but lack of surprise—when a milkman who was making his daily deliveries broke a wheel on his car in front of the orphanage. The milkman knocked on the door and asked if he could give the orphans his supply of milk!

'We can refer these facts to no other law than to that announced by the Savior in His promise to answer the prayer of faith,' comments Francis Wayland. 'There is no reason to suppose that in the case of Mr. Müller and his associates there is anything exceptional or peculiar. What God has done for them we cannot doubt that, under the same conditions, He will do for every other believing disciple of Christ.'

A.T. Pierson wrote of Müller's faith, 'One day Müller was pressed to share what he considered to be the power behind his [prayer] ministry. He surprised the questioner by talking about his *secret death*. "There was a day," he said, "when I died, utterly died." And as he spoke, he bent lower until he almost touched the floor. He continued, "I died to George Müller, his preferences, his opinions, tastes and will, died to the world, its approval or censure, died to the approval or blame of even my friends or brethren, and since then I have studied only to show myself approved of God."'

At the age of 70, Müller embarked on a 17-year preaching ministry to several continents. During that tour, on board a steam ship for an appointment to be kept in Quebec, a dense fog surrounded the ship for 24 hours. Müller told the captain that he *must* arrive in Quebec by Saturday afternoon. When the captain said that this was impossible, Müller responded, 'I have not ever broken an engagement in 57 years. Let us go down into the chart-room and pray.'

In the chart room, Müller knelt down and prayed a simple prayer. When he finished, the captain was intending to pray. Müller, however, instructed him not to: 'First, you do

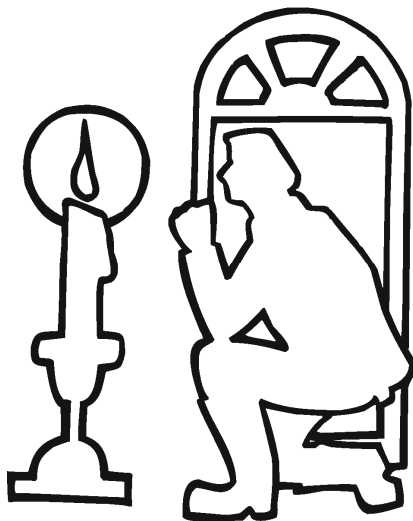
not believe He will [answer], and second, I believe He has and there is no need whatever for you to pray about it. Get up, Captain, and open the door and you will find the fog is gone.' When the captain got up on deck, the fog was gone. And on Saturday afternoon, George Müller was indeed in Quebec for his engagement.

George Müller was connected to the 'invisible' (as was Elijah, whom he admired) by his lifelong inclination to 'always pray and not give up' (Luke 18:1). When Jesus returns, will He find such faith on earth (Luke 18:8)?



Albert Lemmons is believed to be the owner of the world's largest collection of writings by and about George Müller. The author of several books on prayer, Albert considers Müller to be his mentor. His favorite book of all time is The Autobiography of George Müller.

**Often, God's answer came while Müller was still
on his knees.**



Suggested Reading

Our Time of Need

Periodical

Pray! magazine, formerly published by NavPress, was a tool (1) to guide believers into a deeper relationship with Christ through prayer; and (2) to help believers pray more powerfully and effectively. To get a downloadable prayer library, go to www.navpress.com/prayerlibrary.aspx.

Books

Bezek, Cynthia Hyle. 2008. *Come away with me: A guide to prayer retreats*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: *Pray!* Books, NavPress.

Is spiritual refreshment a luxury or a necessity? God has more for us than working on empty, and he longs to be our source of renewal. This is a practical, easy-to-follow guide on how to create your own personal getaway. Jesus found time to be with the Father, and so can you.

Blackaby, Henry and Norman. 2006. *Experiencing prayer with Jesus: The power of His presence and example*. Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Publishers.

This 2006 U.S. National Day of Prayer book will revolutionize your prayer life. The One who loved us to his death continues to pursue us, humbly laying his heart over ours. His presence and power will be with us, and we will be changed forever.

Card, Michael. 2005. *A sacred sorrow: Reaching out to God in the lost language of lament*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress.

It's easy to praise God when things in your life are going well, but what about the other times? What happens when mountaintop experiences cascade into seasons of struggling in the valley?

Greig, Pete. 2007. *God on mute*. Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books.

Greig reflects in a deeply moving way on unanswered prayer. His wife, Samie, was diagnosed with a brain tumor. During his dry seasons, God seemed absent, silent, even nonexistent.

Kent, Carol. 2004. *When I lay my Isaac down: Unshakable faith in unthinkable circumstances*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress.

The Kents' son shot and killed his wife's ex-husband. Carol's retelling of her agony will touch your heart as she outlines eight principles she and her husband learned.

King, Paul L. 2004. *Moving mountains: Lessons in bold faith from great evangelical leaders*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Chosen Books.

Let the sound, practical teaching, and amazing life experiences of twelve giants of faith lead you into new dimensions in your walk with God.

Lamb, Joy. 2007. *The sword of the Spirit: The word of God*. 7th ed. Jacksonville, Fla.: Lamb's Books, Inc.

This 'handbook of praying God's Word' is not a book to read, but one to be used daily. It is a powerful tool to use when you pray individually or in a group, for Word-centered praying, led by the Spirit, is an absolute must for effective intercession.

Lotz, Anne Graham. 2001. *Heaven, my Father's house*. Nashville, Tenn.: W Publishing Group, Thomas Nelson.

Combining the apostle John's glorious description of heaven from Revelation with heart-touching reflections on her own father's charming mountain home, Lotz weaves a tapestry of truth that will take away your fear of death.

Morgan, Robert J. 2001. *The Red Sea rules: 10 God-given strategies for difficult times*. Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson.

Just as Moses and the Israelites found themselves caught between 'the devil and the deep Red Sea,' so are we often overwhelmed by life's problems. But God delivered the Israelites, and he will deliver us too.

Sherrer, Quin and Ruthanne Garlock. 2006. *Lord, I need your healing power*. Lake Mary, Fla.: Charisma House.

When health challenges hit you or your family head-on, many emotions and questions are a natural response. You will be encouraged by these Biblical teachings and real-life stories.

Shriver, Gary and Mona Shriver. 2005. *Unfaithful: Rebuilding trust after infidelity*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: Cook Communications Ministries.

The authors share, from their own perspective, the impact of adultery on their family, the strength they found in their faith, what it takes to endure, and more.

Sittser, Jerry. 2003. *When God doesn't answer your prayer*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.

Although he prayed for the protection of his family—his wife, his daughter, and his mother all died in an automobile accident. Sittser offers hard-won spiritual insights.

Stone, Perry. 2009. *Angels on assignment: God's relentless protection of your loved ones and you*. Lake Mary, Fla.: Charisma House.

Our world is not a safe place, and we all need continued protection—at home, on the job, and on the road. For believers, there are many scriptures promising God can and will protect us.

Tucker, Ruth A. 2002. *Walking away from faith: Unraveling the mysteries of belief & unbelief*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

Why do some lose their faith? Why do some choose to abandon religious beliefs that were once meaningful? What happens when they do? The author tackles these tough questions.

Wright, H. Norman. 2005. *A dad-shaped hole in my heart*. Bloomington, Minn.: Bethany House.

If your dad abused you, neglected you, or left you, the result is an emptiness that cries to be filled, because when our dads disappoint us, we can be affected for the rest of our lives.

Yancey, Philip. 2001. *Soul survivor: How my faith survived the church*. New York: Doubleday.

Yancey tells his own struggle to reclaim his beliefs, interwoven with portraits of notable Christians from all walks of life who have succeeded in the pursuit of an authentic faith.

Ziglar, Zig. 1998. *Confessions of a grieving Christian*. Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson.

After experiencing the death of his oldest daughter, the author realized many things about himself, his family, his priorities, and God as he journeyed through his grief.

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- *How to start each day*, page 3.
- *None other lamb*, page 11.
- *Thanks to Kathy Cail, R&P participant and staff, who added the verses for Longer Passages to Go Deeper.*
- *Make my life an offering*, page 7.
- *I refuse*, page 17.

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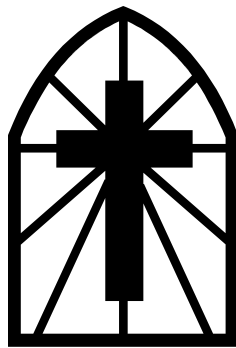
For additional information, contact:

SIL International Personnel
7500 W. Camp Wisdom Road
Dallas, TX 75236
Phone: (972) 708-7313; Fax: (972) 708-7422
Email: evelyn_davis@sil.org

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Notes

So, if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, *act* like it ... don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be *alert* to what's going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from *His* perspective.



Colossians 3:1-2

The Message





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