

# THE CROSS



**“A CHURCH WHERE EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY AND CHRIST IS LORD OF ALL.”**



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## Independence Day Thursday July 4, 2024

### Does the Bible instruct us to have childlike faith

Unquestionably, faith is the essence of the Christian life. Faith is exhorted throughout the Bible and is presented as an absolute necessity. In fact, “without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). The entire chapter of Hebrews 11 is about faith and those who possessed it. Faith is a gift from God, as we see in Ephesians 2:8-9 and not something we come up with on our own. All Christians have received the gift of faith from God, and faith is part of the armor of God—the shield with which we protect ourselves from the “flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16).

The Bible never exhorts us to have “childlike” faith, at least not in so many words. In Matthew 18:2 Jesus says  
*(Childlike Faith on page 12)*

### What is the definition of hope?

There are two kinds of hope—worldly or temporal hope and the hope of believers. In a general sense, hope is a mental focus or feeling of anticipation regarding a future outcome, either of something we want to happen or wish to be true or don’t want to happen or be true. Secular hope is a subjective expectation; it may be solidly based or misguided, as it does not consider God’s will. We hope for things we want (*I hope I get the job; I hope she’ll marry me*). We hope for good outcomes (*I hope my child returns home safely; I hope I don’t get sick*). But worldly hope is not a virtue, as it usually contains some degree of uncertainty, doubt, and personal bias and can often be misdirected and selfishly motivated (Proverbs 10:28; 1 Timothy 6:17).

*(Hope on page 12)*

### What can I do when I don't feel any love for God?

First, an important question: are you born again? Have you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation? If so, the enmity between you and your Creator is gone, and you have entered a secure and loving relationship with God. If you have no faith in Christ, then you have no relationship with God (John 14:6).

Feelings come and go, and you may not always “feel” love for God. Hearts tend to grow cold, and even the most on-fire Christians can struggle with maintaining their love and service to God. The church in Ephesus had to be reprimanded by Christ: “You have forsaken the love you had at first” (Revelation 2:4). A lack of feelings of love, however, does not mean the relationship has ended. God  
*(Love for God on page 13)*

### What is the difference between faith and hope?

Faith and hope are distinct yet related. That there is a difference between faith and hope is evident in 1 Corinthians 13:13, “Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” Two of the three greatest gifts are faith and hope, listed separately. That faith and hope are related concepts is seen in Hebrews 11:1, “Faith is confidence in what we hope for.”

Faith is a complete trust or confidence in something. Faith involves intellectual assent to a set of facts and trust in those facts. For example, we have faith in Jesus Christ. This means we completely trust Jesus for our eternal destiny. We give intellectual assent to the facts of His substitutionary death and bodily resurrection, and we  
*(Faith and Hope on page 16)*



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#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Prayers	4	Sunday Church School	10	Daily Confession of Faith	23
Fruit of the Spirit	5	90 Devotions	14	Spiritual Inspiration	24
Name of God	6	The Armor of God	15	The Beauty of Holland	25
Daily Bible Reading	6	How to Pray	19	Joyce Meyer	26
Christian Season	7	Our Daily Bread	20	Bible’s Bird’s Eye View	27
Liturgical Color	7	Words To Live By	21	Activities	29
Fasting	8	Spirit Lifters	22		

# Memo from GOD ....

Effective immediately, please be aware that there are changes YOU need to make in YOUR life. These changes need to be completed in order that I may fulfill My promises to you to grant you peace, joy and happiness in this life. I apologize for any inconvenience, but after all that I am doing, this seems very little to ask of you. I know, I already gave you the 10 Commandments. Keep them. But follow these guidelines, also.

## 1. QUIT WORRYING

Life has dealt you a blow and all you do is sit and worry. Have you forgotten that I am here to take all your burdens and carry them for you? Or do you just enjoy fretting over every little thing that comes your way?

## 2. PUT IT ON THE LIST

Something needs done or taken care of. Put it on the list. No, not YOUR list. Put it on MY to-do-list. Let ME be the one to take care of the problem. I can't help you until you turn it over to Me. And although My to-do-list is long, I am after all ... God. I can take care of anything you put into My hands. In fact, if the truth were ever really known, I take care of a lot of things for you that you never even realize.

## 3. TRUST ME

Once you've given your burdens to Me, quit trying to take them back. Trust in Me. Have the faith that I will take care of all your needs, your problems and your trials. Problems with the kids? Put them on My list. Problem with finances? Put it in My list. Problems with your emotional roller coaster?

For My sake, put it on My list. I want to help you. All you have to do is ask.

## 4. LEAVE IT ALONE

Don't wake up one morning and say, "Well, I'm feeling much stronger now, I think I can handle it from here." Why do you think you are feeling stronger now? It's simple. You gave Me your burdens and I'm taking care of them. I also renew your strength and cover you in my peace. Don't you know that if I give you these problems back, you will be right back where you started? Leave them with Me and forget about them. Just let Me do my job.

## 5. TALK TO ME

I want you to forget a lot of things. Forget what was making you crazy. Forget the worry and the fretting because you know I'm in control. But there's one thing I pray you never forget. Please, don't forget to talk to Me - OFTEN! I love YOU! I want to hear your voice. I want you to include Me in on the things going on in your life. I want to hear you talk about your friends and family. Prayer is simply you having a conversation with Me. I want to be your dearest friend.

## 6. HAVE FAITH

I see a lot of things from up here that you can't see from where you are. Have faith in Me that I know what I'm doing. Trust Me; you wouldn't want the view from My eyes. I will continue to care for you, watch over you, and meet your needs. You only have to trust Me. Although I have a much bigger task than you, it seems as if you have so much trouble just doing your simple part. How hard can trust be?

## 7. SHARE

You were taught to share when you were only two years old. When did you forget? That rule still applies. Share with those who are less fortunate than you. Share your joy with those who need encouragement. Share your laughter with those who haven't heard any in such a long time. Share your tears with those who have forgotten how to cry. Share your faith with those who have none.

## 8. BE PATIENT

I managed to fix it so in just one lifetime you could have so many diverse experiences. You grow from a child to an adult, have children, change jobs many times, learn many trades, travel to so many places, meet thousands of people, and experience so much. How can you be so impatient then when it takes Me a little longer than you expect to handle something on My to-do-list? Trust in My timing, for My timing is perfect. Just because I created the entire universe in only six days, everyone thinks I should always rush, rush, rush.

## 9. BE KIND

Be kind to others, for I love them just as much as I love you. They may not dress like you, or talk like you, or live the same way you do, but I still love you all. Please try to get along, for My sake. I created each of you different in some way. It would be too boring if you were all identical. Please, know I love each of your differences.

## 10. LOVE YOURSELF

As much as I love me for one reason of Love. Love Me. Heartache when I are very precious you, how can you not love yourself? You were only ... to be loved, and to love in return. Love your neighbors. But also love yourself. See you so angry with yourself when things go to me. Don't ever forget that!

Created by **I AM**, a God. It makes My wrong, **You**.

With all My heart I love **YOU** ...

**God**



**GOD CAN TURN AROUND  
ANY SITUATION.**

## What are the ingredients to a truly biblical worship service?



Humans are instinctively worshiping creatures. The psalmist expressed this when he wrote, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1). Cicero in the first century BC observed that religion, regardless of its form, was a universal trait of man. Seeing that people are going to worship something or someone, we should ask what is worship? Whom and how shall we worship? What constitutes a biblical worship service, and, most importantly, will we be “true worshipers” (John 4:23) or false worshipers?

Christ commanded that true worshipers worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The apostle Paul explained that we worship by the Spirit of God (Philippians 3:3), meaning that true worship comes only from those who have been saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts. Worshiping in spirit also refers to having the proper heart attitude, not simply adhering to rites and rituals. To worship in truth means to worship according to what God has revealed about Himself in Scripture. In order for our worship to be biblical, it must abide within the doctrine of Christ (2 John 1:9; see also Deuteronomy 4:12; 12:32; Revelation 22:18–19). True worship relies on the instructions given in the Bible and can be offered with or without a Book of Confessions, Rules of Order, or other manmade book of instructions or guidance.

The first-century church engaged in several devotional acts in their worship services, from which we can determine what comprises a truly biblical worship service: the communion supper was observed (Acts 20:7), prayers were offered up (1 Corinthians 14:15–16), songs were sung to the glory of God (Ephesians 5:19), a collection was taken (1 Corinthians 16:2), the Scriptures were read (Colossians 4:16), and the Word of God was proclaimed (Acts 20:7).

Communion and prayer were also essential elements of the early church service. The communion supper commemorates Jesus’ death until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:25–26). Prayer is directed to God (Nehemiah 4:9; Matthew 6:9) and in harmony with the will of God (1 John 5:14). Corporate prayer is important because it creates unity (John 17:22–23) and is a key aspect of believers’ encouraging one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and spurring one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).

In our worship, we should sing. The apostle Paul commands us to “speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19–20). Singing to the Lord and to one another conveys truth set to music (Colossians 3:16).

Part of true biblical worship is giving an offering, as Paul instructed the Corinthian church: “Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1 Corinthians 16:1–2). Our regular giving for the support of the Lord’s work is a serious responsibility. The opportunity to give should be viewed as a thrilling blessing, not as a burdensome matter for grumbling (2 Corinthians 9:7). Additionally, freewill giving is the only explicitly biblical method for financing the work of the church.

Finally, preaching and teaching are major ingredients of true biblical worship. Our teaching must be the Scriptures alone, the only means of equipping believers for life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16–17). The godly preacher or teacher will teach only from the word and rely on the Spirit of God to do His work in the minds and hearts of his listeners. As Paul reminded Timothy, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). A church gathering that does not include the Word of God as a major component is not a biblical worship service.

As we follow the pattern of true worship in Scripture, let us worship God with great passion. We must not convey to the world the impression that the worship of our God is a boring, lifeless ritual. We have been redeemed from sin. Let us therefore praise our Creator as His children who are grateful for His bountiful blessings. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe” (Hebrews 12:28–29).

[www.GotQuestions.org](http://www.GotQuestions.org)

**Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”**



**When You Need Hope**

**Key Scripture:** "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" Psalms 42:11

**Key Thought:** Hope is the anchor of your soul. (See Hebrews 6:19)

**Prayer:** Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon me as I endeavor to experience the hope you promise to me.<sup>1</sup> You are my hiding place and my shield, and I find hope in your Word.<sup>2</sup>

Let my life be filled with your hope, joy, peace, and faith so that I will always continue to abound in hope through the power of your Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Thank you for equipping me with your protective armor, Father.<sup>4</sup> I put on the hope of salvation as my helmet.<sup>5</sup> Thank you for giving me everlasting consolation and good hope through your grace.<sup>6</sup>

Even now, as I pray, I experience your hope as being the sure and steadfast anchor of my soul.<sup>7</sup> From now on, I will hope continually, and I will praise you more and more.<sup>8</sup> Christ in me is the hope of glory.<sup>9</sup>

Father, thank you for exchanging my sense of hopelessness with your abiding hope.

**References:** (1) Psalms 33:22; (2) Psalms 119:114; (3) Romans 15:13; (4) Ephesians 6:11; (5) Ephesians 6:17; (6) 2 Thessalonians 2:16; (7) Hebrews 6:19; (8) Psalms 71:14; (9) Colossians 1:27.

Bible Prayers for all your needs  
Victory House Publishers

**OUR SICK AND SHUT-IN NEED YOUR CALLS, YOUR CARDS AND YOUR VISITS...  
BUT ABOVE ALL, THEY NEED ALL OF OUR PRAYERS!**

**Words From Barbara Perry**

**Morning and new beginning prayer**

"O God, we find ourselves at the beginning of another day. We do not know what it will bring. Please help us to be ready for whatever it may be. If we are to stand up, help us to stand bravely. If we are to sit still, help us to sit quietly. If we are to lie low, help us to do it patiently. If we are to do nothing, let us do it gallantly. We pray just for today, for these twenty-four hours, for the ability to cooperate with others according to the way Jesus taught us to live. "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." May these words that he taught us become more than words", Hallelujah Thank You Jesus.

**Don't Cover It Up**

Read Psalms 32:3. "Let us pray, "Father, thank You that we can receive Your forgiveness and have a clean heart today. Thank You that we can be honest about any sin and any mistake and get the toxins of guilt and bitterness out of our soul. Help us to walk in the joy of our salvation and in the fullness of health, its In Jesus' Name we ask and pray,, Hallelujah Thank You Jesus."

In today's Scripture, David is talking about what happened to his health during the year that followed his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband to cover it up. He lied to himself about what he'd done, buried the guilt and shame, and pretended that nothing was wrong. But the problem with burying negative toxins is they make our soul unhealthy and poison our

physical health as well. So today I encourage you don't let guilt and condemnation from something that you've done wrong in the past keep your soul unhealthy, hold you back, or weaken you physically. Get honest with yourself and get the toxins out. Go to God as David did and ask Him to forgive you, to cleanse your heart, to restore your soul and your health. Receive His mercy, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah.

**Praying the Psalms**

Praying the Psalms, Is one of the most personal books of the Bible, one that many people find speaks to them on a personal and emotional level, Amen.

Let us pray, Holy Father, Thank You for being our Shepherd, and for taking care of all our needs. We know that You shall take care of us, and we will want for nothing. Thank You for bringing us through periods of turmoil because It's time to decompress and grow closer to You, and it replenishes our soul. Lord keep us on the path of righteousness Lord, so that our life will glorify You. We know that even if we face suffering, hardship, pain, and death, we do not need to fear any of those things because You walk beside us, and Your presence comforts us in all circumstances. You have protected us from evil and from those who hate us, but they only hate us because they hate You. You anointed us with oil, adopting us into Your family through the blood of Jesus Christ. Goodness and mercy will always be with us, and that we will dwell in Your house forever, Amen.

**Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy. Psalm 99:9**



**The fruit of the Spirit** abides in us and it is up to us to cultivate it so that we may experience the blessing and the fullness of the Spirit. God is the husbandman..."He prunes, nurtures, waters and protects His own. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit will energize and control every faculty of our nature when our will joins the will of God. Then the "beauty of the Lord will be upon us" (Psalm 90:17) and "we shall bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4)."

## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

**"But the fruit of the Spirit is LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE: against such there is no law."** (Galatians 5:22, 23)

The fruit of the Spirit abides in us and it is up to us to cultivate it so that we may experience the blessing and the fullness of the Spirit. God is the husbandman..."He prunes, nurtures, waters and protects His own. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit will energize and control every faculty of our nature when our will joins the will of God. Then the "beauty of the Lord will be upon us" (Psalm 90:17) and "we shall bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4)."

The fruit of LOVE when properly motivated "is pure, far reaching, forgiving. There is no limit to the good that LOVE does. God is LOVE. (I John 4:7)

JOY never fades, it is never destroyed by circumstances, it is unaffected by wealth or poverty, sickness or health. It is found in the presence of God (Psalm 16:11)

PEACE "is a tranquility of mind as a result of a right relationship with God". The PEACE of God in our hearts challenges sin at every turn and deals with it immediately in order to maintain that right relationship. (Ephesians 2:14)

LONG-SUFFERING means steadfastness of the soul under provocation. It means forbearance and patient endurance of ill-treatment, without anger or thought of revenge. (Colossians 3:12, 13)

GENTLENESS is sweet reasonableness, calmness and graciousness. It calms troubled waters, settles turmoil and heals strife. (James 3:17)

GOODNESS does good to others. It is kindness of heart and good deeds. It may not always be a gentle word, but a stern rebuke done for the good of someone else. (Psalm 33:5)

MEEKNESS disarms the stormy, tempestuous person. The qualities of mildness and gentleness in dealing with others. It is not weak. It is a high quality of spiritual strength. (I Timothy 6:11)

FAITH means faithfulness to Christ and His cause. It manifests itself in being a trustworthy steward of God. It is trust and obedience, belief in God's word and promises. (Hebrews 11:1)

TEMPERANCE is power, it is strength, having self-control. It means discipline. It provides balance to the Christian's life. It enables him to praise Him whether in discipline or testing. (Proverbs 11:1) (Information taken in part from World-Wide Keswick publication and Holy Scriptures)

Satan tries to imitate the real thing with an artificial fruit. As you can see, the artificial fruit is very much like the real thing and if we are not careful, we can fall into the trap of expressing limited love, temporary joy, numbness, insensitivity, manipulation, hypocrisy, half-heartedness, false modesty and choosing lesser goals.

### THE FRUIT, *The Artificial Fruit,* **The Weed**

LOVE, *limited love*, **hatred**; JOY, *temporary JOY*, **sorrow**; PEACE, *numbness, carelessness*, **anxiety strife**;  
PATIENCE, *laziness, insensitivity*, **impatience**; KINDNESS, *manipulation by kindness*, **pride**;  
GOODNESS, *hypocrisy*, **evil**; FAITHFULNESS, *half-heartedness*, **infidelity**;  
MEEKNESS, *false modesty*, **self-seeking**; SELF-CONTROL, *choosing lesser goals*, **lack of control**  
(The Fruit of the Spirit, John W. Sanderson)

**READ THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR**

**JULY**

1. Psalms 112-114
2. Psalms 115-118
3. Psalms 119
4. Psalms 120-123
5. Psalms 124-128
6. Psalms 129-132
7. Psalms 133-136

8. Psalms 137-139
9. Psalms 140-144
10. Psalms 145-147
11. Psalms 148-150
12. Proverbs 1-3
13. Proverbs 4-7
14. Proverbs 8-11
15. Proverbs 12-14

16. Proverbs 15-18
17. Proverbs 19-21
18. Proverbs 22-24
19. Proverbs 25-28
20. Proverbs 29-31
21. Ecclesiastes 1-3
22. Ecclesiastes 4-6
23. Ecclesiastes 7-9

24. Ecclesiastes 10-12
25. Song 1-4
26. Song 5-8
27. Isaiah 1-3
28. Isaiah 4-6
29. Isaiah 7-9
30. Isaiah 10-12
31. Isaiah 13-15

**AUGUST**

1. Isaiah 16-18
2. Isaiah 19-21
3. Isaiah 22-24
4. Isaiah 25-27
5. Isaiah 28-30
6. Isaiah 31-33
7. Isaiah 34-36

8. Isaiah 37-39
9. Isaiah 40-42
10. Isaiah 43-45
11. Isaiah 46-48
12. Isaiah 49-51
13. Isaiah 52-54
14. Isaiah 55-57
15. Isaiah 58-60

16. Isaiah 61-63
17. Isaiah 64-66
18. Jeremiah 1-2
19. Jeremiah 3-5
20. Jeremiah 6-8
21. Jeremiah 9-12
22. Jeremiah 13-16
23. Jeremiah 17-20

24. Jeremiah 21-23
25. Jeremiah 24-26
26. Jeremiah 27-29
27. Jeremiah 30-32
28. Jeremiah 33-36
29. Jeremiah 37-39
30. Jeremiah 40-42
31. Jeremiah 43-46

**SEPTEMBER**

1. Jeremiah 47-49
2. Jeremiah 50-52
3. Lamentations 1-5
4. Ezekiel 1-3
5. Ezekiel 4-7
6. Ezekiel 8-11
7. Ezekiel 12-14

8. Ezekiel 15-18
9. Ezekiel 19-21
10. Ezekiel 22-24
11. Ezekiel 25-27
12. Ezekiel 28-30
13. Ezekiel 31-33
14. Ezekiel 34-36
15. Ezekiel 37-39

16. Ezekiel 40-42
17. Ezekiel 43-45
18. Ezekiel 46-48
19. Daniel 1-3
20. Daniel 4-6
21. Daniel 7-9
22. Daniel 10-12
23. Hosea 1-4

24. Hosea 5-7
25. Hosea 8-10
26. Hosea 11-14
27. Joel 1-3
28. Amos 1-3
29. Amos 4-6
30. Amos 7-9

Name of God	Meaning	Application
<b>EL ELOHE YISRAEL</b>	God, the God of Israel	The God of Israel is distinct and separate from all false gods of the world.
<b>EL ELYON</b>	The God Most High	He is the Sovereign God in whom we can put our trust. El Elyon has supremacy over all false gods.
<b>ELOHIM</b>	The All-powerful One	God is the all-powerful creator of the universe. God knows all, creates all, and is everywhere at all times. The plural of "EL".
<b>EL OLAM</b>	The Eternal God The Everlasting God	He is the Beginning and the End, the One who works His purposes throughout the ages. He gives strength to the weary.
<b>EL ROI</b>	The God Who See Me	There are no circumstances in our lives that escape His fatherly awareness and care. God knows us and our troubles.
<b>EL SHADDAI</b>	The All Sufficient One, The God of the Mountains, God Almighty	God is the all-sufficient source of all of our blessings. God is all-powerful. Our problems are not too big for God to handle.
<b>IMMANUEL</b>	God With Us "I AM"	Jesus is God in our midst. In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.

There are various names of God, many of which enumerate the various qualities of a Supreme Being. The English word "god" (and its equivalent in other languages) is used by multiple religions as a noun or name to refer to different deities, or specifically to the Supreme Being, as denoted in English by the capitalized and uncapitalized terms "God" and "god". Ancient cognate equivalents for the biblical Hebrew Elohim, one of the most common names of God in the Bible, include proto-Semitic El, biblical Aramaic Elah, and Arabic 'ilah. The personal or proper name for God in many of these languages may either be distinguished from such attributes, or homonymic. For example, in Judaism the tetragrammaton is sometimes related to the ancient Hebrew ehyeh ("I will be"). In the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 3:14), Yahweh, the personal name of God, is revealed directly to Moses. Correlation between various theories and interpretation of the name of "the one God", used to signify a monotheistic or ultimate Supreme Being from which all other divine attributes derive, has been a subject of ecumenical discourse between Eastern and Western scholars for over two centuries. In Christian theology the word is considered a personal and a proper name of God. On the other hand, the names of God in a different tradition are sometimes referred to by symbols. The question whether divine names used by different religions are equivalent has been raised and analyzed.

### THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

**The Season After Pentecost** covers 10-14 Sundays. The liturgical color is red for the Season After Pentecost.

Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after the day of Pentecost. This Sunday emphasizes the three-fold manifestation of the Godhead (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit/Ghost): three and yet one. White is the appropriate color.

**Color:** Red is symbolic of loyalty, power, witness, Christian zeal, blood, fire, the work and ministry of the Church, and the Holy Spirit.

### KINGDOMTIDE

**Kingdomtide** begins on the last Sunday in August and continues until the beginning of Advent. The emphasis includes evangelism, world missions, and the work for peace and justice in all relationships. During this period, special emphasis is placed on the Kingship of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The observance is wrapped up in the heightened awareness of one of the basic tenets of the Christian faith – the hope of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven

**Color:** Green is symbolic of freshness of nature, hope, life and growth.

### LITURGICAL COLORS

Liturgy or liturgical comes from the Greek word “leitourgia” that means public service. Thus, liturgical refers to the rites or forms prescribed for use in public worship. Colors add brightness, variety, and visual appeal for the worshiper and Christian believer. But beyond this is the wealth of meaning and theological interpretation wrapped up in the colors used during the various seasons. Below are the prevalent colors and their liturgical interpretations.

**Purple** (violet or lilac) is the color used to denote royalty, praying, fasting, and penitence. It represents a symbol of the majesty of Christ, and Jesus’ humanity, suffering, and fasting. Advent and Lent are seasons when this color is used.

**Green** is symbolic of the freshness of nature, hope, life, and growth. It is used during The Season After Epiphany and Kingdomtide. Some denominations use green during The Season after Pentecost.

**White** is symbolic of light, joy, purity, glory, and the bright light of truth. It is used during Christmas/Christmastide, Epiphany (January 6), Baptism of the Lord Sunday, Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday, Maundy Thursday (if Holy Communion is celebrated), Easter/Eastertide, Ascension Day/Sunday, Trinity Sunday, and Christ the King Sunday. It is appropriately used for Consecrations, Baptisms, Marriages, and Holy Communion.

**Red** is symbolic of loyalty, power, witness, Christian zeal, blood, fire, the work and ministry of the Church, and the Holy Spirit. It is used on Pentecost, for some The Season After Pentecost, and Church anniversaries, dedications, and ordinations. The color red is appropriate for year-round use if there is no other color available.

**Black** represents grief, sorrow, mourning, or death. It is used on Good Friday and sometimes for funerals. (Some prefer to use white for funerals to celebrate the homegoing of a loved one.)

**Gold** is the color denoting worth, virtue, glory to God, and Christian might. It was one of the gifts given to the Baby Jesus by the Magi (Wise Men). The Kingship of the Christ Child and the price Jesus paid on Calvary is also represented in this color.

### Other Colors

**Blue** is an alternate liturgical color that is symbolic of hope. It is often used as an alternate color to purple during Advent by some denominations.

**Kente Cloth** is being used by many African-American congregations as a parament. It is also used on clergy and choir robes or liturgical stoles. Most of the kente cloth contains several of the liturgical colors. Kente Cloth is a strong woven fabric from the West African country of Ghana. Its name comes from the word “kenten” referring to that which cannot be torn under any circumstances. It is woven in narrow four inch strips and stitched together to make the desired width of the fabric. Traditionally, this cloth carried symbolic designs that indicated a proverb or special message. In addition to the meaning wrapped up in the colors, it also represents the commitment of believers not to allow anything to separate them from the love of God and a reminder to hold on to one’s heritage.

**Fasting for Health, Healing and a Heart for God's Vision for the Church**

1. The Daniel Fast involves a spiritual commitment to God. "Daniel proposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the Kings delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank." (Daniel 1: 8)

2. Faith is foundational to the Daniel Fast. "Then I set my face toward my God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting" ( Daniel. 9:30 "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17: 21)

3. Fast and yield yourself to God as a servant. Daniel said, "as you see fit, deal with your servants" (Daniel 1:13)

4. Schedule your prayer / And end with thanksgiving. Daniel "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks" (Daniel 6: 10)

5. Begin with confession, (repentance), dedication, and prayer-"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way of everlasting" (Psalm 39: 23-24)

Remember: The Daniel Fast will lead to spiritual insight. "... to these young men God gave knowledge" (Daniel 1: 17)

**Guidelines for Daniel Fast**

**Foods We May Eat**

After answering hundreds of questions about the Daniel Fast on the blog, I developed these food guidelines. My hope is that it will serve as a more complete list. The original list used by many people was issued in a book about fasting. I know the author tried to do the best he could, but that isn't the same as getting hundreds of questions seeking clarification.

Please make sure to READ THE LABEL when purchasing packaged, canned or bottled foods. They should be sugar-free and chemical-free. Keep this in mind as you review this list of acceptable foods. Look for the list of ingredients on the label (not the nutritional value) to make sure all the ingredients comply with the Daniel Fast Guidelines.

Foods to include in your eating plan during the Daniel Fast

**All fruits.** These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Fruits include but are apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon

**All vegetables.** These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Vegetables include but are artichokes,

asparagus, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, collard greens, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers are an option if you are not allergic to soy.

**All whole grains,** including whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes and popcorn.

**All nuts and seeds,** including sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame. Also nut butters including peanut butter.

**All legumes.** These can be canned or dried. Legumes include dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, white beans.

**All quality oils** including olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

**Beverages:** spring water, distilled water or other pure waters.

**Other:** tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

**Note: Unsweetened plant-based milks and juices can be used in recipes or on cereal, but the only beverage on the Daniel Fast is water.**

**Foods to avoid on the Daniel Fast**

**All meat,** animal, fish and seafood products including beef, lamb, pork, poultry, fish and shellfish.

**All dairy products** including milk, cheese, cream, butter, and eggs.

**All sweeteners** including sugar, raw sugar, date sugar, honey, syrups, molasses, cane juice, date honey, and stevia.

**All leavened bread** including Ezekiel Bread (it contains yeast and honey) and baked goods.

**All leavening agents** including yeast, baking soda and baking powder.

**All refined and processed foods products** including artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white rice, white flour, and foods that contain artificial preservatives.

**All deep-fried foods** including potato chips, French fries, corn chips.

**All solid fats** including shortening, margarine, lard and foods high in fat.

**Beverages** including coffee, tea, herbal teas, carbonated beverages, energy drinks, and alcohol.

Remember, **READ THE LABELS** so you are aware of the ingredients in the package.!

**Be blessed on your fast**

Learn more about the Daniel Fast at <http://Daniel-Fast.com>

**"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5: 17)**



## 10 Practical Guidelines on Fasting By Charles Ng of Singapore

1. Enter into fasting with a positive faith. If you are determined to seek God diligently by fasting, you have a Scriptural right to expect that God will reward you. In Matthew 6:18, Jesus promises to every believer who fasts correctly: “your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

2. Do not wait for an emergency to drive you to fast. It is better to begin fasting when you are spiritually up than down. The law of progress in God’s Kingdom is from “strength to strength” (Ps. 84:7), “from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17), and from “glory to glory” (2Cor. 3:18).

3. Do not set for yourself too long a period of fasting. If you are fasting for the first time, begin by omitting one or two meals. Then, move on to longer periods such as a day or two. It is better to begin with a short period and achieving it than to do a long period of fasting and not achieving it.

4. During your period of fasting, feed on God’s Word, the Bible. Where possible, read a portion of Scripture before each period of prayer. The Psalms are especially helpful.

5. Avoid boastfulness—apart from special periods of prayer, your life should be as normal as possible.

6. Check on your motives each time you fast. Take time to read Isaiah 58.

7. If you are on regular medication or suffer from diabetes or TB, it is wise to obtain medical advice before entering into any fast.

8. As you enter fast, you might suffer discomfort, unpleasant physical symptoms such as dizziness or nausea. Do not be deterred. Go through with the fast as planned. After the first day or two, these unpleasant physical reactions usually subside.

9. Remember that hunger is purely a

matter of habit. If you hold out, the sensation of hunger will go away. Sometimes you can fool your stomach by drinking a glass of water instead of snacking.

10. Guard against constipation. Before and after fasting, choose meals that will help you in this respect such as fresh fruits, fruit juices, dried figs, prunes, apricots, or oatmeal.

**Total Fast:** Abstaining from solid foods for 24 hours. Taking only water.

**Partial fast:** Abstaining from solid foods for an extended part of the day, e.g. from 7:00 am until 7:00 PM. Taking only water.

**1 Meal Fast:** Sacrificing one full meal a day, e.g. Abstaining from lunch.

**Daniel Fast:** Abstaining from meals and other delicacies. Taking only small portions of fresh vegetables, fruit and juices.

# + PRAY

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

► **PRAY FOR THE VULNERABLE:** Ask God to protect those most vulnerable to the effects of the virus, especially the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.

► **PRAY FOR GOVERNMENT LEADERS:** Ask God to give our local, state, and national leaders wisdom in how to deal with the virus.

► **PRAY FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS:** Ask that God would guide and protect them as they care for the sick.

► **PRAY FOR FAMILIES:** Ask God to comfort and provide for those whose businesses, job stability, and schooling have been affected.

► **PRAY FOR THE CHURCH:** Ask God to help His people have courage, find ways to serve those in need, and continue proclaiming the Gospel.



## A Poem of Praise

Father God, I love You so;  
You care for me even when I don't know.  
I often question Your intent,  
Despite those promises You've already kept.  
I try to make sense of all around,  
yet my eyes focus narrowly on my own.  
You forgive my impatience,  
and my self-righteous thoughts;  
And secured my salvation through Your Son's  
death on the cross.  
He redeemed all my sins and gave me new life;  
an act that cost a most precious price.  
With Your help, dear Lord,  
I will trust in the perfect plan  
that is a gift from Your great hand.  
Thank You for each day's new mercies,  
and the grace that wipes away all my inequities.  
To You, Adonai, is my praise for always;  
may my last breath be a whisper  
giving You all the glory.

*juliesunne.com*



## Sunday School is a Family Affair

We have classes for all ages – 3 to 103  
Virtual Classes (See page 29 for Details)  
(For Transportation Needs Please call the Church 860-344-9527)

### Come Grow with US!

#### Ceaseless Love/Hope Comes in the Morning

Devotional Reading: **Psalm 30**

Background Scripture: **Lamentations 3:16-24; Psalm 30**

#### EXALT!

**Declaration:** Lamentations 3:16-24

**<sup>16</sup> He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; <sup>17</sup> my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; <sup>18</sup> so I say, 'Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the Lord.' <sup>19</sup> The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! <sup>20</sup> My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. <sup>21</sup> But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup> The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup> The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'**

**Affirmation:** We value the relief that comes when expressing our pain and despair to God.

#### ENGAGE

Unit II, "Expressing Hope," turns attention to the prayers of ancient Israel as a model for offering to God our praise and petitions. These Hebrew prayers are also expressions of Christian hope. The first lesson of the unit is from a song of lament in Lamentations 3, while the remaining lessons of the unit are drawn from the Psalms.

During the profound pain and disappointments, we sometimes experience in life, how do we overcome despair? The writer of Lamentations reminds us of God's steadfast love and that faithfulness triumphs over despair.

Break into small groups and discuss your thoughts on the following: 1) How would you respond to the question: Why do bad things happen to good people? If possible, focus on examples in your experience, where this has been the case. 2) Discuss cases where people blame God for troubling experiences in their lives and whether or not in some cases, they have reason to do so. 3) Are there situations you know of where people experience serious disappointments and pain, yet, persevere and find resilience to get back up after falling down and retaining belief and faith? If so, what is it that enables people to do so as far as you can tell? Share your findings with the larger group.

#### EDUCATE:

**Lamentations 3:16-20:** We might recall that in his desolation, Job cried out, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21), and he had not sinned. Despite his harsh situation, he refused to speak ill of God, but rather to glorify God. And later he asked, "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad? (Job 2:10b). The passage of scripture here describes a truly harsh, bitter condition he and his people are receiving because of their sins against God. The people had been warned and did not heed the prophecies. The Book of Lamentations describes the fall of Jerusalem in 587-586 BC and is traditionally associated with the prophet Jeremiah, who had prophesied and was a witness to the fall (see 2Chronicles 35:25). The destruction of Jerusalem, and particularly of the temple, was crushing to the Jewish people, for much of their theology was founded on the belief that God had given them this land, God's Glory dwelt in the temple, and God would protect them from their enemies. "A long siege left many dead from starvation, and a significant number of the remaining population was brutalized and taken captive to Babylon..... Especially hurtful to the inhabitants of Jerusalem was the utter destruction of the temple, the centerpiece of their city and the symbol of their special relationship with God (Jeremiah 17:4-14; 52:12-23)" (Standard Lesson Commentary 2023-2024, Large Print Edition, p. 386). As the beginning of this chapter makes clear, rather than portraying God as defender of Jerusalem, in the first half of this chapter, the speaker sees God as using the Babylonian

*(Hope on page 11)*

**Pray for all of our children, teens, young adults in this school years that God's hands will be upon them keeping them from all hurt, harm and danger. Also pray for all of our families, friends, and all of God's children.**

(Hope from page 10)

conquerors as the “rod of God’s wrath” (v. 1). This perspective is evident in verses 16-19 as well, and as noted in verse 18, leads the author to express that all he has hoped for from the Lord has been lost.

**Lamentation 3:21-24:** Noting the absence of hope in verse 18 and its renewed presence in verses 21-24, it is possible to understand the prior hope as a misplaced hope that needed to die before a new, more appropriate hope could take root. This new hope is rooted not in God’s might as a warrior, but rather in God’s love and mercy (v. 22) and faithful (v. 23). Recalling the harsh and bitter experiences of God’s wrath has not led to total despair for there is, yet, something far more appealing and eternal. God’s wrath will not last forever and neither will the sense of hopelessness. But God’s love and mercy endures forever. The speaker “draws from the rich tradition of prayer and praise that he undoubtedly knows from his own education, beginning in his boyhood. His recollection interrupts the downward spiral of despair with memories that are deeply ingrained through years of study and more profoundly formative than the traumatic memories of recent suffering..... His hope is revived as he begins to view his situation from the perspective of revelation and tradition rather than personal experience.... [Revelation and tradition reveal that] divine wrath is a function of divine love. God’s anger over Judah’s persistent sin was his love, taking disciplinary form. His purpose was not to destroy Judah, nor was it to forsake her and give up on his covenant. Rather, the judgment was a kind of radical surgery performed to save the patient” (Ibid., p. 389).

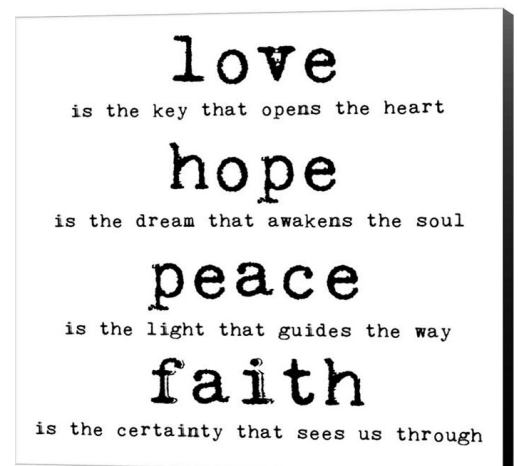
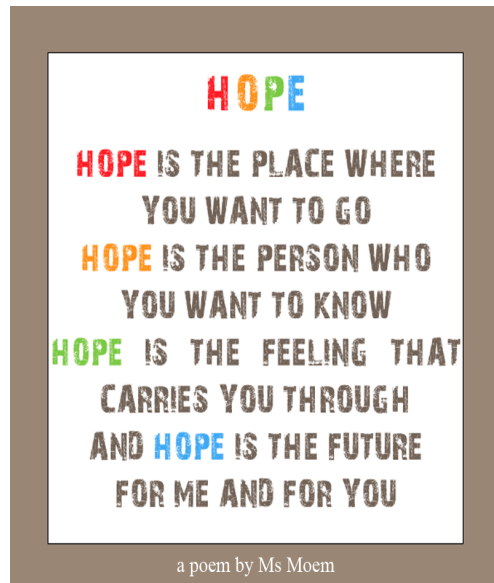
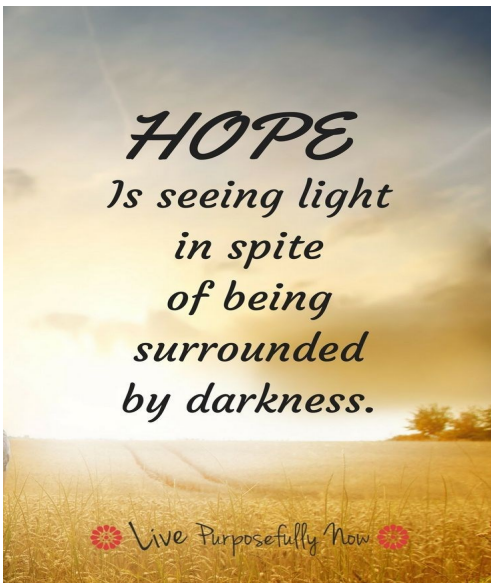
**ELEVATE:**

Break into small groups and discuss the following: 1) Has this description of the experience of the chosen people of God impacted your understanding, growth, and trust in God? How might knowledge of the experience of God’s chosen people impact others? 2) Does this study help you gain a better understanding of the cultural significance of the fall of the temple? If so, how might we relate this insight to our view of the church buildings? 3) How might this lesson help in our growth, understanding, and acceptance of God’s unconditional love of us, as well as our empathy for others who are experiencing difficult times?

**iThink:**

1. Study the role of the temple and the impact of its fall in 587-586 BC.
2. Write a letter to God lamenting a bad thing that has happened in your life. Seal the letter and burn it, letting go of the pain as it turns to ashes. How does this make you feel?
3. Write a letter to yourself from God in response to your lament expressing God’s love for you.
4. Study other periods of time when cultures have been decimated by war. How did these cultures recover?
5. Brainstorm encouraging things to do or say for a person who is experiencing sorrow in his/her life.
6. Collect ways we try to relieve physical pain. Discuss ways that God relieves our emotional pain.

**KEY VERSE: This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to and end. Lamentations 3:21-22**



*(Childlike Faith from page 1)*

that we must “become as little children” in order to enter the kingdom of God. The context of Jesus’ statement is the disciples’ question, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (verse 1). In response, Jesus “called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me’” (verses 2–5).

So, as the disciples focus on what constitutes “greatness” in heaven, Jesus provides a new perspective: the way “up” is “down.” Meekness is required (cf. Matthew 5:5). Jesus exhorts the disciples (and us) to seek to possess a childlike modesty in addition to their faith. Those who willingly take the lowest position are the greatest in heaven’s eyes. A young child is destitute of ambition, pride, and haughtiness and is therefore a good example for us. Children are characteristically humble and teachable. They aren’t prone to pride or hypocrisy. Humility is a virtue rewarded by God; as James says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:10).

Although faith is not mentioned in Matthew 18:1–5, we know that it isn’t just humility that ushers a person into heaven; it is faith in the Son of God. A humble, unpretentious faith could rightly be called a “childlike faith.” When Jesus wanted to bless the children, He said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” (Mark 10:14–15). How does a child receive a gift? With openness, honesty, and unbridled joy. That type of happy authenticity should be a hallmark of our faith as we receive God’s gift in Christ.

Of course, children are easily fooled and led astray. In their artlessness they tend to miss the truth and be drawn to myths and fantasies. But that is not what is meant by having a childlike faith. Jesus promoted a humble, honest faith in God, and He used the innocence of a child as an example. Emulating the faith of children, we should simply take God at His Word. As children trust their earthly fathers, we should trust that our “Father in heaven [will] give good gifts to those who ask him” (Matthew 7:11).

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*(Hope from page 1)*

The biblical definition of *hope* is “the sure and confident expectation of receiving what God has promised us in the future.” The believer’s hope is not a faint or obscure wish but “an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19). In Scripture, hope is a virtuous quality because it contains no doubt, always trusting in God’s faithfulness and presence no matter the circumstances, whether good or bad (Psalm 71:5).

The apostle Paul includes hope among the three indispensable Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Love is the greatest because God values it most (1 Corinthians 13:13) and because it is eternal (1 Corinthians 13:8). Neither faith nor hope will be needed in heaven; we won’t have to trust an unseen God or anticipate His appearance because we will see Him and be with Him in the perfection of His presence forever.

Hope and faith are closely tied because both operate based on trusting God and living according to what is unseen. The author of Hebrews explains that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, ESV). Regarding hope, Paul reasons, “But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?” (Romans 8:24). Like faith, hope is built on our unwavering confidence in God’s goodness and power to do what He says He will do because of His unending love for us (Psalm 33:18; 146:5). Such confidence declares about our Savior, “No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame” (Psalm 25:3). Biblical hope, like faith, takes custody here and now of God’s good promises yet to come.

Christians use *hope* in both senses. A pastor may say, “I hope today’s sermon blesses you.” The apostle Paul writes, “I hope to see you” (Romans 15:24) and “I hope to come to you soon” (1 Timothy 3:14) in his letters to fellow believers. But the believer’s hope is so much more than wishful

thinking. The apostle Peter explains that God “has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). We have the “hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time” (Titus 1:2). We don’t merely wish we’ll go to heaven when we die; the Bible says we can know it with all certainty: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

Paul’s hope was so secure in his eternal future that he was willing to suffer and die for it: “I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6; see also Acts 26:6). Paul said that without faith and hope in God’s promise of resurrection life, Christians “are more to be pitied than anyone in the world” (1 Corinthians 15:19, NLT).

The biblical definition of *hope* includes not only the act of confident expectation but also the object of it—“Christ Jesus our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1). The psalmist writes, “For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth” (Psalm 71:5). Jesus Christ is the “hope of Israel” (Jeremiah 14:8; Acts 28:20) and of all nations and peoples (Isaiah 42:4; Matthew 12:21; Romans 15:12–13; 1 Timothy 4:10).

Having only temporal hope in people and things of this life is, in reality, to live in a state of hopelessness, “without hope and without God in the world.” (Ephesians 2:12). By contrast, the believer’s hope cannot be frustrated or hindered by anything in this life. We know what we have safely “stored up for [us] in heaven” (Colossians 1:5), where our treasures are kept secure (Matthew 6:19–20).

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*(Love for God from page 1)*

does not change; His love is constant.

As cliché as it may sound, don't give up! Know that God loves you and desires for you to have an abundant and peaceful life within the parameters of His will. God is a loving, compassionate Father who looks upon you in great love. Second Corinthians 1:3 describes God as "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort." He loves you and desires to help you through this trying time of feeling disconnected from Him.

Our relationship with God is based on love. He *loved* us and sent His Son (John 3:16), and our response to His love is to love Him in return (1 John 4:19) and serve Him. Not service out of obligation, but out of true love for Him and who He is. God's will is not that we give of ourselves "reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). So how do you become that "cheerful giver" who gives your heart freely to God?

### **Reflect upon your walk thus far**

Should Christians feel warm and fuzzy toward God at all times? No. We all have valleys and deserts in our walk and feel all kinds of emotions at various points in our lives—just like we do in other relationships. In rekindling your affection for God, start at the very beginning. Reflect on where and how your walk with Him first began. When were you saved? Why were you saved? What did you feel when you first began to discover who God was? How has Jesus made Himself known to you in your daily life since? What things in life has God brought you through? Consider past victories (1 Samuel 7:12) and those times when you felt a deep desire and longing for God in your life.

### **Pray**

Spend some quality time with God. Get to know Him more. To know Him is to love Him. Ask God to increase your desire for Him. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit and rekindle your appreciation of His character. Continue submitting to the Holy Spirit and confess to God that you cannot overcome these struggles on your own—none of us can. When we ask for His helping hand, He always hears us! Psalm 18:6 says, "In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears."

### **Read Scripture**

During the times when you feel nothing toward God, it helps to read His Word to remember how *He* feels about *you*. Dig into Scripture as much as possible while dealing with these feelings of disinterest. God's Word is truly "a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105). Try reading a psalm a day. The book of Psalms is very encouraging and has many prayers that you might really identify with, given your current situation. It is in the Word that God reveals Himself and His will for you.

### **Seek Christian counseling**

This is especially important if you are angry or upset with God for some reason. It is difficult to feel love for someone while you are angry at him. If there is an anger problem, how long have you felt this way? Can you attribute your feelings to a specific situation? Does anything help relieve your feelings or temporarily change your perception? Biblical counseling can help you work through specific issues. Through the healing process, guided by a pastor or other counselor, you should be able to let go of the anger and hurt, and your perception of God should change for the better.

### **Find a godly mentor**

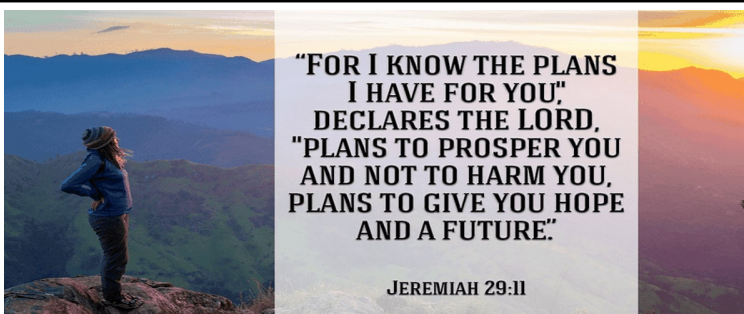
Surely, there is someone you know who loves the Lord and whose Christian joy is evident. Ask this person to meet with you regularly. Spend time together, study the Bible together, pray together. Ask questions about your mentor's spiritual walk and how you can love the Lord more. This friend can encourage you on your journey.

### **Plug into your local church**

God intends for the Christian life to be lived corporately. That's why He calls the church the "body" of Christ (Romans 12:5). There are many opportunities to serve the Lord through your church and many people who can exhort, support, and encourage you.

God will continue to love you dearly! "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17–19).

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## AN OLD MAN'S PRAYER

Read: Daniel 9:3-19

**So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. Daniel 9:3**

Have you heard the story about the 85-year-old man who was arrested for praying?

You probably have. That's the story of Daniel, an elderly Jewish resident in Babylon sentenced to death for faithfully talking to God (Daniel 6).

Although the prayer that sent Daniel to the lions' den is his most famous talk with God (6:11), it wasn't the only time we see him in prayer.

In Daniel 9, we read an example of how he prayed. Daniel had been reading in his scroll of Jeremiah that the captivity of his people would last 70 years, and the people were 67 years into the exile (Jeremiah 25:8-11). He was eager for it to end.

God had called His people to live righteously, but they weren't doing that. Daniel decided to live righteously despite their lack of faith. He began to pray that God would not delay the end of the captivity.

As he prayed, Daniel focused on worship and confession. His pattern of prayer gives us an important insight into talking to God. We are to recognize that God is "great and awesome" (Daniel 9:4) and that "we have sinned" (v. 15). In prayer, we praise and confess.

Let's follow Daniel's lead. To him, prayer was as vital as life itself. Dave Branon

**Prayer Tips: Stick a prayer-prompting Post-it note on your dashboard as a reminder to pray for, not be angry with, other drivers on the road.**

## LOST PRAYERS

Read: Psalm 86:1-7

**When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me. Psalm 86:7**

The headline read: "Unanswered Prayers: Letters to God Found Dumped in Ocean."

The letters, three hundred in all sent to a New Jersey minister, had been tossed in the ocean, most of them unopened. The minister had died long before the letters were found. How they came to be floating in the surf off the

New Jersey shore is a mystery.

The letters were addressed to the minister because he had promised to pray. Some of the letters asked for frivolous things; others were written by anguished spouses, children, or widows. They poured out their hearts to God, asking for help with relatives who were abusing drugs and alcohol or spouses who were cheating on them. One asked God for a husband and father to love her child. The reporter concluded that all were "unanswered prayers."

Not so! If those letter-writers cried out to God, He heard each one of them. Not one honest prayer is lost to His ears.

"All my longings lie open before you, Lord," David wrote in the midst of a deep personal crisis, and "my sighing is not hidden from you" (Psalm 38:9). David understood that we can cast all our cares on the Lord, even if no one else prays for us. He confidently concluded, "when I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me" (86:7). David Roper

**Prayer Tip: Ask your youth pastor for the name of a teen who needs special prayer, and talk to God about him or her.**

## BREAD FOR THE COMING DAY

Read: Matthew 6:9-13

**Give us today our daily bread. Matthew 6:11**

Not long ago, I traveled to the Democratic Republic of Congo to lead a Bible conference. I took in the beauty of the Nyungwe Forest and Ruzizi River, which separates Congo from Rwanda. I experienced the amazing hospitality of the Congolese people, and I was moved by their sincere faith in God's provision.

Because unemployment, poverty, and malnutrition are serious problems there, the people often don't know their next meal will come from. So each time they sit down to eat, they thank God and ask Him to provide the next meal.

Their prayer sounds a lot like Jesus's prayer in Matthew 6:11, "Give us today our daily bread." the word bread refers to any food. The word today indicates provision that comes one day at a time.

Many first-century workers were paid one day at a time, so a few days' illness could spell tragedy. Daily could be translated "for the coming day." the

prayer would read: "Give us today our bread for the coming day." it was an urgent prayer to those who lived from hand to mouth.

This prayer calls Jesus's followers everywhere to recognize that our ability to work and earn our food comes from God's hand. Marvin Williams

**Prayer Tip: Get the book *The Valley of the Vision* (Arthur Bennett, editor) and learn from the Puritan tradition of prayer.**

## A SURPRISE ANSWER

Read: 1 John 3:16-23

**We have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. 1 John 3:21-22**

When Josh McDowell's mother died, he was not sure of her salvation. He became depressed. Was she a Christian or not? "Lord," he prayed, "somehow give me the answer so I can get back to normal. I've just got to know." it seemed like an impossible request.

Two days later, Josh drove out to the ocean and walked to the end of a pier to be alone. There sat an elderly woman in a lawn chair, fishing. "Where's your home originally?" she asked. "Michigan—Union City," Josh replied. "Nobody's heard of it. I tell people it's a suburb of—" "Battle Creek," interrupted the woman. "I had a cousin from there. Did you know the McDowell family?"

Stunned, Josh responded, "Yes, I'm Josh McDowell."

"I can't believe it," said the woman. "I'm a cousin to your mother." "Do you remember anything at all about my mother's spiritual life?" asked Josh. "Why

sure—your mom and I were just girls—teenagers—when a tent revival came to town. We both went forward to accept Christ." "Praise God! Shouted Josh, startling the surrounding fisherman.

God delights to give us what we ask when it is in His will. Never underestimate His desire to respond to our prayers. A surprise may be just around the corner. Dennis DeHaan

**Prayer Tips: Use an app such as Prayermate.**

# THE ARMOR OF GOD

## EPHESIANS 6:10-18

“... Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” v. 10, 11

### The Shield of Faith (Eph. 6:16)

Faith is being sure that God will keep His promises. Faith in God protects you when you are tempted to doubt.



### Feet Prepared with the Gospel of Peace (Eph. 6:15)

The Gospel of Peace is being right with God and being contented in troubled times. Jesus said peacemakers were blessed. →

### The Helmet of Salvation (Eph. 6:17)

Put on the Helmet of Salvation by believing that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again.

### The Breastplate of Righteousness (Eph. 6:14)

Righteousness is being honest, good, humble, and fair to others. It means standing up for weaker people.

### The Belt of Truth (Eph. 6:14)

Truth keeps us from giving in to the world’s beliefs. Compare your beliefs and actions to the truth of the Word of God.

### The Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17)

which is the Word of God. God’s Word is our offensive weapon. When we tell others what the Bible says, the Holy Spirit helps people see their bad thoughts and actions, and makes them want to be forgiven.

## Ephesians 6:10-20 (New King James Version)

<sup>10</sup> Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, <sup>13</sup> against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— <sup>19</sup> and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

(*Faith and Hope from page 1*)

then *trust* in His death and resurrection for our salvation.

Biblical hope is built on faith. Hope is the earnest anticipation that comes with believing something good. Hope is a confident expectation that naturally stems from faith. Hope is a peaceful assurance that something that hasn't happened yet will indeed happen. Hope must involve something that is as yet unseen: "Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?" (Romans 8:24). Jesus' return is our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13)—we can't see Him yet, but we know He's coming, and we anticipate that event with joy.

Jesus said He is coming again (John 14:3). By faith, we trust Jesus' words, and that leads to hope that we will one day be with Him forever. Jesus was resurrected from the dead, "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). That is the basis for our faith. Then we have Jesus' promise: "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). That is the basis of our hope.

The relationship between faith and hope can be illustrated in the joy a child feels when his father tells him they are going to an amusement park tomorrow. The child believes that he will go to the amusement park, based on his father's word—that is **faith**. At the same time, that belief within the child kindles an irrepressible joy—that is **hope**. The child's natural trust in his father's promise is the faith; the child's squeals of delight and jumping in place are the expressions of the hope.

Faith and hope are complementary. Faith is grounded in the reality of the past; hope is looking to the reality of the future. Without faith, there is no hope, and without hope there is no true faith. Christians are people of faith and hope. We have "the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time" (Titus 1:2).

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### What does it mean that faith, hope, and love remain (1 Corinthians 13:13)?

First Corinthians 12 talks about spiritual gifts, which are distributed by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4). Thus one Christian may receive one type of gift while another receives a different gift. Chapter 13 goes one step further and mentions the three gifts that are common for all Christians: faith, hope, and love. Verse 13 says, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

In stating that faith, hope, and love remain, Paul does something interesting and unexpected: he uses a singular verb for a compound (and therefore plural) subject. His statement in 1 Corinthians 13:13 could be literally rendered "faith, hope, and love *remains*." Paul's point is that, essentially, faith, hope, and love are united; what happens to one happens to all. And what happens is that they "remain."

The fact that faith, hope, and love remain must be understood in light of the broader context. Paul had just listed another set of three gifts that would *not* remain: "Where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away" (1 Corinthians 13:8). So, the passage contains a contrast: three gifts of the Spirit that will cease, and three gifts that will never end. Faith, hope, and love will always remain.

The Corinthian church members were priding themselves on the fact that they could speak in tongues and demonstrate other attention-getting gifts. Paul reminds them of "the most excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31)—the way of love. The gifts that the Corinthians so desired were but temporary; faith, hope, and love, the foundational gifts, are permanent and therefore more to be desired.

Faith, hope, and love are gifts in the present age, and they will still be gifts in the age to come. The NLT translates the promise this way: "Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love." It's easy to see how love will last forever, since love is an essential part of God's nature (1 John 4:16). But what about faith and hope? Those two gifts will likewise last forever. Faith in the Son of God will not cease in the eternal state; we will not stop trusting Jesus just because our faith has become sight. If anything, our trust in Him will grow greater. Similarly, our hope will not cease just because our blessed hope has come. Our lives will continue in the eternal state, as will our expectation of other things in an infinite sequence of adventure. As commentator Alexander MacLaren explained, "That Future presents itself to us as the continual communication of an inexhaustible God to our progressively capacious and capable spirits. In that continual communication there is continual progress. Wherever there is progress there must be hope. And thus the fair form . . . will move before us through all the long avenues of an endless progress, and will ever and anon come back to tell us of the unseen glories that lie beyond the next turn, and to woo us further into the depths of heaven and the fulness of God" (*MacLaren Expositions of Holy Scripture*, 1 Corinthians).

Faith, hope, and love are the three gifts that will be ours throughout all eternity. And agape love is the ultimate gift. God in His goodness gives us the privilege of possessing these gifts today, and we look forward to having them remain with us forever.

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## What is agape love?

The Greek word *agape* is often translated “love” in the New Testament. How is “agape love” different from other types of love? The essence of agape love is goodwill, benevolence, and willful delight in the object of love. Unlike our English word *love*, *agape* is not used in the New Testament to refer to romantic or sexual love. Nor does it refer to close friendship or brotherly love, for which the Greek word *philia* is used. Agape love involves faithfulness, commitment, and an act of the will. It is distinguished from the other types of love by its lofty moral nature and strong character. Agape love is beautifully described in 1 Corinthians 13.

Outside of the New Testament, the word *agape* is used in a variety of contexts, but in the vast majority of instances in the New Testament it carries distinct meaning. *Agape* is almost always used to describe the love that is of and from God, whose very nature is love itself: “God is love” (1 John 4:8). God does not merely love; He *is* love. Everything God does flows from His love. *Agape* is also used to describe our love for God (Luke 10:27), a servant’s faithful respect to his master (Matthew 6:24), and a man’s attachment to things (John 3:19).

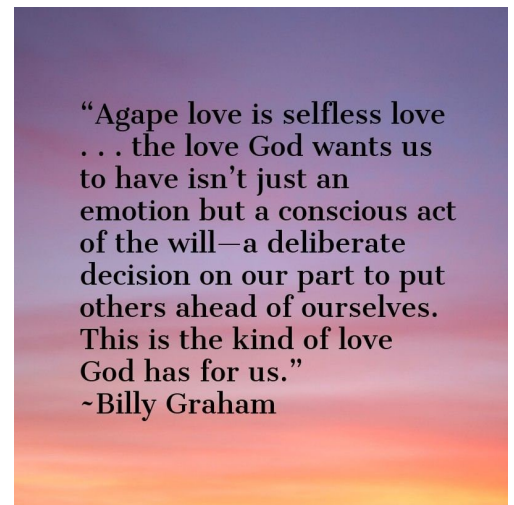
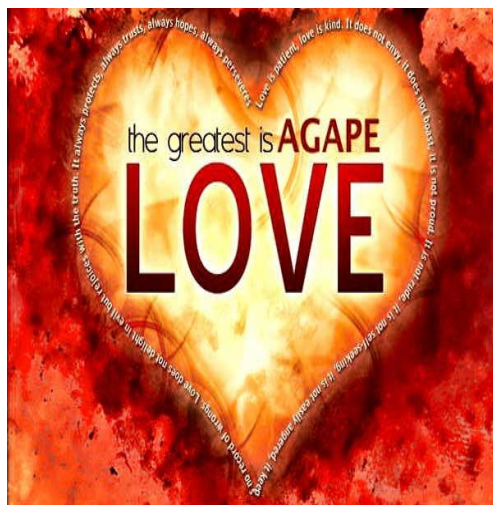
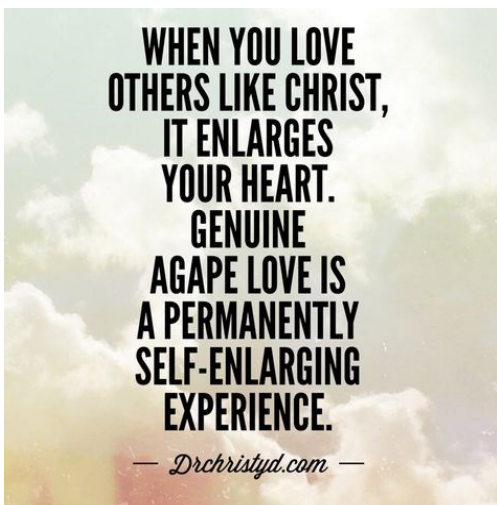
The type of love that characterizes God is not a sappy, sentimental feeling such as we often hear portrayed. God loves because that is His nature and the expression of His being. He loves the unlovable and the unlovely, not because we deserve to be loved or because of any excellence we possess, but because it is His nature to love and He must be true to His nature.

Agape love is always shown by what it does. God’s love is displayed most clearly at the cross. “God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4–5, ESV). We did not deserve such a sacrifice, “but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). God’s agape love is unmerited, gracious, and constantly seeking the benefit of the ones He loves. The Bible says we are the undeserving recipients of His lavish agape love (1 John 3:1). God’s demonstration of agape love led to the sacrifice of the Son of God for those He loves.

We are to love others with agape love, whether they are fellow believers (John 13:34) or bitter enemies (Matthew 5:44). Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of sacrifice for the sake of others, even for those who may care nothing at all for us. Agape love as modeled by Christ is not based on a feeling; rather, it is a determined act of the will, a joyful resolve to put the welfare of others above our own.

Agape love does not come naturally to us. Because of our fallen nature, we are incapable of producing such a love. If we are to love as God loves, that love—that *agape*—can only come from its Source. This is the love that “has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” when we became His children (Romans 5:5; cf. Galatians 5:22). “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16). Because of God’s love toward us, we are able to love one another.

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# A Prayer for America

Father in Heaven,  
We, the people, in the  
land of the free and  
the home of the brave,  
desperately need You.

Oh that we would leave our ways  
of seeking to be blessed  
and instead seek to bless others.

We beg for Your guidance and wisdom  
for our leaders.

We ask You to protect our land  
from enemies, both within and without.

And we praise you for the freedom  
we have through the blood of Your Son.  
May Your plan be the desire of our nation.

Amen

*rachefwojo.com*

### Question: "Is the ACTS formula for prayer a good way to pray?"

**Answer:** The ACTS formula for prayer has been taught to children and new believers for many years. *ACTS* is an acronym that gives a basic model on how to pray: with Adoration, with Confession, with Thanksgiving, and with Supplication. While prayer formulas can help us learn to pray, they do not necessarily make our prayers more effective or ensure that our prayers will be answered. This model for prayer is loosely based on the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), except for thanksgiving.

The ACTS model for prayer includes these elements:

**Adoration** – The *A* in the ACTS model stands for adoration, which means worship—glorying and exalting God. Through adoration, we show our loyalty and admiration of our Father. As we pray, we are called to worship God in adoration. This could be a song of praise to Him, praying a psalm of worship, declaring His attributes, or a myriad of other forms of worship.

**Confession** – The *C* in the ACTS model stands for confession. The word *confess* means “to agree with.” When we confess our sins, we agree with God that we are wrong and that we have sinned against Him by what we have said, thought, or done. God forgives us and restores our fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9).

**Thanksgiving** – The *T* represents thanksgiving. Philippians 4:6 says, “With thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (ESV). How is thanksgiving different from adoration? The difference is that worship focuses on who God is; thanksgiving focuses on what God has done. We can thank God for many things including His love, salvation, protection, and provision.

**Supplication** – The *S* stands for supplication, which refers to prayer for our and others’ needs. A supplication is a request or petition. We may pray for mercy (Psalm 4:1), leading (Psalm 5:8), wisdom (James 1:5), and much more. Paul encouraged us to make “supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18, ESV), which means to pray diligently for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Is the ACTS formula for prayer biblical? The acronym itself isn’t found in the Bible, but it can serve as a guide, especially when we are learning how to pray. Remember, prayer isn’t a formula, and each prayer doesn’t have to cover every type of prayer. God wants us to talk from our hearts and express ourselves to Him. As we grow in our love for Jesus Christ, we will naturally desire to talk to Him more.



### Question: "What is the five-finger prayer?"

**Answer:** The five-finger prayer is a method to help people remember categories of people to pray for. It is a memory device used as an aid to prayer.

**The little finger**, or the pinkie, is the smallest finger, and it represents the individual who is praying. We need to pray for ourselves, but in humility we need to remember that we are the least important.

**The ring finger** this is usually the weakest of our fingers, and it reminds us to pray for the weak and the sick among us.

**The middle finger** is the tallest finger, and it reminds us to pray for our leaders.

**The pointer finger**, or the index finger, reminds us to pray for people who point the way—teachers and church leaders.

**The thumb** is the thickest and strongest digit, and when the hand is at rest, the thumb is the nearest to the rest of the body, reminding us to pray for family and friends—people who are closest to us.

The five-finger prayer has been popularized by Pope Francis. There is nothing specifically Roman Catholic about the five-finger prayer; it is simply one method to help people remember whom to pray for, similar to a prayer list. Since we all have our hands with us, the reminder of those in need of prayer is constant.

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GOD IS IN CONTROL

**The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised. Job 1:21**

Carol couldn't understand why it was happening all at once. As if work wasn't bad enough, her daughter fractured her foot in school, and she herself came down with a severe infection. What did I do to deserve this? Carol wondered. All she could do was ask God for strength.

Job didn't know why calamity had hit him so hard either—pain and loss far greater than what Carol experienced. There's no indication he was aware of the cosmic battle for his soul. Satan wanted to test Job's faith, claiming he'd turn from God if he lost everything (Job 1:6-12). When disaster struck, Job's friends insisted he was being punished for his sins. That wasn't why, but he must have wondered, Why me? What he didn't know was that God had allowed it to happen.

Job's story offers a powerful lesson about suffering and about faith. We may try to discover the reason behind our pain, but perhaps there's a bigger story behind the scenes that we won't understand in our lifetime.

Like Job, we can hold on to what we do know: God is in full control. It's not an easy thing to say, but in the midst of his pain, Job kept looking to God and trusting in His sovereignty: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (V. 21). May we too keep trusting in God no matter what happens—and even when we don't understand. Leslie Koh

**What challenges are you facing? Which promises of God give you strength to keep going?**

Dear Father, I don't understand why some of life's challenges happen to me. But I choose to trust You.

**For further study, read *In the Grip of God's Love* at [DiscoverODB.org](http://DiscoverODB.org)**

**Today's Scripture:** Job 1:6-12, 20-22

<sup>6</sup>One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. <sup>7</sup>The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."

<sup>8</sup>Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

<sup>9</sup>"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. <sup>10</sup>"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. <sup>11</sup>But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

<sup>12</sup>The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger...."

<sup>20</sup>At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head.

Then he fell to the ground in worship <sup>21</sup>and said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."

<sup>22</sup>In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

**INSIGHT**

The word we translate as Satan in Hebrew means "accuser" or "adversary." The role he plays in the narrative of Job is peculiar: he challenges the superiority of Yahweh by accusing God Himself. If people worship God only because He's good to them, Satan asks, then is He really worthy (Job 1:9-11)?

Job's faithfulness in the midst of trial demonstrated that God's people do worship Him in both good and bad times and thus silenced the accuser. But Job also learned his own lesson: no one—angelic or human—can tell Him what He must do. God is worthy of His people's faithfulness regardless of what we might experience in life. Jed Ostoich

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CLINGING TO GOD

**Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired. 2 Samuel 23:10**

When Joni Eareckson Tada speaks of Rika, she highlights her friend's "deep, time-tested faith in God" and the endurance she's developed while living with a debilitating chronic condition. For more than fifteen years, Rika has been bedbound, unable even to see the moon from her room's tiny window. But she hasn't lost hope; she trusts in God, reads and studies the Bible, and as Joni describes it, she "knows how to stand firm during fierce battles against discouragement."

Joni likens Rika's tenacity and persistence to that of Eleazar, a soldier at the time of King David who refused to flee the Philistines. Instead of joining the troops who took off, "Eleazar stood his ground...till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword" (2 Samuel 23:10). Through God's power, "The Lord brought about a great victory that day" (V. 10). As Joni observes, even as Eleazar hung on to the sword with determination, so too does Rika cling to "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). And there, in God, she finds her strength.

Whether in glowing good health or battling discouragement over a chronic condition, we too can look to God to deepen our stores of hope and to help us to endure. In Christ we find our strength. Amy Boucher Pye

**What examples of tenacity and endurance have you witnessed? How does God restore and renew you when you feel spent and wrung out?**

God of all power, thank You for loving me and helping me endure. Please help me to focus on You that I might continue to trust and love you.

**Today's Scripture:** 2 Samuel 23:8-12

<sup>8</sup>These are the names of David's mighty warriors: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter.

<sup>9</sup>Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty warriors, he was with David when they taunted the Philistine gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the Israelites retreated, <sup>10</sup>but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistine till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The Lord brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead.

<sup>11</sup>Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistine banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. <sup>12</sup>But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistine down, and the Lord brought about a great victory.

**INSIGHT**

Second Samuel 23 highlights events from David's life, including some of the exploits of his three mighty men (VV. 8-12) and thirty chief men (VV. 13-19). His later years were peaceful as far as international affairs were concerned. But it was a turbulent time for the family, when problems originating years before continued to escalate, and he witnessed a heartbreaking and life-threatening struggle for power among his own sons. His son Absalom had attempted to usurp David from the throne (CH. 15). Now his fourth son, Adonijah (3:4), tried to set himself up as king (1 Kings 1).

David's story reveals a far-from-perfect man. He was an adulterer and murder (2 Samuel 11) and an inept disciplinarian of his children (CHS. 13-14). Yet he had a heart for God and was loyal to Him, and he repented when he realized his sin (Psalms 32, 51). Alyson Kieda

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## How can I learn to trust that God is in control?

Before we can learn to trust that God is in control of all of life's circumstances, we have to answer four questions: Is God really in control? How much control does He have? If He is not in complete control, then who/what is? How can I learn to trust that He is in control and rest in that?

Is God really in control? The concept of the control of God over everything is called the "sovereignty" of God. Nothing gives us strength and confidence like an understanding of the sovereignty of God in our lives. God's sovereignty is defined as His complete and total independent control over every creature, event, and circumstance at every moment in history. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent, God does what He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. God is in complete control of every molecule in the universe at every moment, and everything that happens is either caused or allowed by Him for His own perfect purposes.

"The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, 'Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand'" (Isaiah 14:24). Nothing is random or comes by chance, especially not in the lives of believers. He "purposed" it. That means to deliberately resolve to do something. God has resolved to do what He will do, and nothing and no one stands in His way. "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please" (Isaiah 46:10). This is our powerful, purposeful God who is in control of everything. That should bring us great comfort and help to alleviate our fears.

But exactly how much control does God have? God's total sovereignty over all creation directly contradicts the philosophy of open theism, which states that God doesn't know what's going to happen in the future any more than we do, so He has to constantly be changing His plans and reacting to what the sinful creatures do as they exercise their free will. God isn't finding out what's going to happen as events unfold. He is continuously, actively running things—ALL things—here and now. But to think He needs our cooperation, our help, or the exercise of our free will to bring His plans to pass puts us in control over Him, which makes us God. Where have we heard that lie before? It's a rehash of Satan's same old lie from the Garden—you shall be like God (Genesis 3:5). Our wills are only free to the extent that God allows us that freedom and no farther. "All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'" (Daniel 4:35). No one's free will trumps the sovereignty of God.

Some people find it appealing to think that Satan has control over a certain amount of life, that God is constantly revising His plans to accommodate Satan's tricks. The book of Job is a clear illustration of just who has the sovereign power and who doesn't. Satan came to God and, in effect, said, "Job only serves you because you protect him." So God gave Satan permission to do certain things to Job but no more (Job 1:6–22). Could Satan do more than that? No. God is in control over Satan and his demons who try to thwart God's plans at every step.

Satan knew from the Old Testament that God's plan was for Jesus to come to the earth, be betrayed, crucified and resurrected, and provide salvation for millions, and if there was any way to keep that from happening, Satan would have done it. If just one of the hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah could have been caused by Satan to fail to come to pass, the whole thing would have collapsed. But the numbers of independent, "free will" decisions made by thousands of people were designed by God to bring His plan to pass in exactly the way He had planned it from the beginning, and Satan couldn't do a thing about it.

Jesus was "delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). No action by the Romans, the Pharisees, Judas, or anyone else kept God's plan from unfolding exactly the way He purposed it from before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1 says we were chosen in Him before the world was even created. We were in the mind of God to be saved by faith in Christ. That means God knit together Satan's rebellion, Adam and Eve's sin, the fall of the human race, and the death and crucifixion of Christ—all seemingly terrible events—to save us before He created us. Here is a perfect example of God working all things together for good (Romans 8:28).

Unlimited in power, unrivalled in majesty, and not thwarted by anything outside Himself, our God is in complete control of all circumstances, causing or allowing them for His own good purposes and plans to be fulfilled exactly as He has foreordained.

Finally, the only way to trust in God's sovereign control and rest in it is to know God. Know His attributes, know what He has done in the past, and this builds confidence in Him. Daniel 11:32b says, "The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." Imagine that kind of power in the hands of an evil, unjust god. Or a god that really doesn't care about us. But we can rejoice in our God's sovereignty, because it is overshadowed by His goodness, His love, His mercy, His compassion, His faithfulness, and His holiness.

But we can't trust someone we don't know, and there is only one way to know God—through His Word. There is no magic formula to make us spiritual giants overnight, no mystical prayer to pray three times a day to mature us, build our faith, and make us towers of strength and confidence. There is only the Bible, the single source of power that will change our lives from the inside out. But it takes effort, diligent, everyday effort, to know the God who controls everything. If we drink deeply of His Word and let it fill our minds and hearts, the sovereignty of God will become clear to us, and we will rejoice in it because we will know intimately and trust completely the God who controls all things for His perfect purpose.

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### **Nothing Can Defeat You**

Spirit goes out of you when you feel overwhelmed and defeated. Get firmly rooted in spiritual understanding; fill your life with faith and goodness. Then nothing can defeat you.

**Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. Matthew 7:24**

Live by the saying of Jesus Christ and become like that wise man who built his house upon rock—an unshakable house against which the storms beat in vain. You can have an inner serenity, strength and courage that defy all the storms of life. Christ makes you strong. You can be undefeatable!

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### **Healing of Sorrow**

Sorrow over the death of a loved one is a heavy weight upon the spirit. It often causes the one who mourns to feel that life will never again be filled with high and joyful attitudes.

But life goes on—and one must live it. The passage the follows has probably brought more healing to the human soul and given more lift to the spirit in sorrow than any other passage in all the literature of the world.

**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. John 11:25**

What a glorious message! Jesus Christ is alive, and those who believe in Him live, also. So our loved one whom we thought dead isn't dead at all, but lives and shall forever touch our lives with the same love and tenderness.

This gives a lift to the spirit that one wants to shout from the housetops the glorious fact that through faith in Jesus Christ, we live. So when sorrow comes, repeat over and over this wonderful passage. And presently the shadows will flee away, and the light of a new day will dawn for you.

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### **Joy of Spiritual Fellowship**

**For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20**

One effective way to get your spirits lifted is to arrange for periodic times of spiritual fellowship—to think and talk and pray with a few people who, like yourself, are seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. This practice will bring you one of the most glorious experiences in life. You will be aware that Jesus Christ is in the midst of such a group, and the warmth and uplift this knowledge will bring to your heart is impossible to describe.

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### **Faith, Hope and Love**

The best three-point formula for living is in this immortal statement: **And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13**

Here are three powerful Spirit Lifters: Faith, the greatest power in this world; Hope, the attitude of expectancy—the best is yet to be; and Love, one of the greatest qualities of all—a heartfelt of compassion and understanding. Christian love gives deep joy. Let these three shine like stars in your life, and your spirit will be uplifted always.

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### **Realize the Power Within You**

Realize the power that is within you, and you will no longer be the victim of a depressed spirit.

And what is this inner power? Simply the God-given ability to believe.

To the extent to which you develop this faculty, you will master the defeats in your life.

The great issue is to learn to believe.

This is stated in one of the most important of all Scripture passages: **Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Mark 9:23**

Learn to believe. Learn to cast out doubt. This is done by the practice of affirmation.

Affirm faith, think positively, visualize achievement. Never think doubt. Always think faith.

This text affirms that when you learn to believe, the area of the impossible is vastly reduced and the area of the possible is greatly increased.

If you set this text firmly at the center of your thought patterns, you will never again be a victim of low spirits.

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### **What Christ Can Do for You**

We read in the Bible of the marvelous things Jesus did for people—and wish that the same experience might be ours. Through faith in Jesus Christ, they were able to accomplish the most astonishing achievements, or were rescued from sad plights or gained tremendous new power over difficulties.

Rather sadly we ask, "Why can't that happen to me?"

It can, and as proof I urge you to meditate upon this tremendous Spirit Lifter: **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8**

The simple truth stated here is that Jesus Christ never changes. He is an invariable factor in a variable world. He is just the same now as when He walked the shores of Galilee. He has the same kindness, the same power to heal and change men's lives. He is the same restorer of courage, the same transformer of people's souls.

Any things that He ever did for anyone throughout all history, He can do for you. It all depends upon how completely you surrender yourself Him—and how sincerely you believe.

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“

*In Christ I am anointed and a powerful person of God.*

*I am a joint-heir with Jesus and more than a conqueror.*

*I am a doer of the Word of God and a channel for His blessings.*

*If God be for me, who can be against me?*

*I am blessed coming in and I am blessed going out.*

*My enemies are fleeing before me.*

*God has commanded His blessing on my storehouses.*

*He has opened His Good treasures and I shall lend and not borrow.*

*I am the head and not the tail.*

*He has given me power to make wealth.*

*I dwell in the secret place.*

*I have His protection and provision.*

*God is my refuge, my fortress.*

*I am not afraid of the snare of the fowler.*

*No Evil shall befall me and no plague shall come nigh my dwelling.*

*God has given his angels charge over me and they are bearing me up in their hands*

*lest I dash my foot against a stone, as declared in Psalm 91.*

*1 Peter 2:9 establishes I am a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.*

*I am a peculiar person called out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

*1 Peter 2:24 states, I have been healed by the stripes of Jesus.*

*Cancer, sugar diabetes, heart disease, sickness, afflictions, infections,  
or any other disease cannot enter my body.*

*I am without spot or blemish, an intercessor,*

*the righteousness of God, saved, and washed in the Blood of Jesus.*

*“No weapon formed against me shall prosper, and every tongue which rise against me in judgement You shall condemn.*

*This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,*

*and their righteousness is from Me,” Says the LORD.*

*I am saved from wrath by Him and justified by the blood of the Lamb.*

*Lord I pray that those may prosper that love Jerusalem and that peace will be within them  
and prosperity in their houses according to Psalms 122:6-9.*

*Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!*

PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNREASONABLE  
AND SELF-CENTERED.

**FORGIVE THEM ANYWAY.**

IF YOU ARE KIND, PEOPLE MAY  
ACCUSE YOU OF ULTERIOR MOTIVES.

**BE KIND ANYWAY.**

IF YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL, YOU WILL WIN  
SOME FALSE FRIENDS AND SOME TRUE ENEMIES

**SUCCEED ANYWAY.**

WHAT YOU SPEND YEARS BUILDING  
SOMEONE CAN DESTROY OVERNIGHT

**BUILD ANYWAY.**

IF YOU ARE HONEST,  
PEOPLE MAY CHEAT YOU.

**BE HONEST ANYWAY.**

IF YOU FIND HAPPINESS,  
PEOPLE MAY BE JEALOUS.

**BE HAPPY ANYWAY.**

THE GOOD YOU DO TODAY MAY  
BE FORGOTTEN TOMORROW.

**DO GOOD ANYWAY.**

GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU HAVE  
AND IT MAY NEVER BE ENOUGH.

**GIVE YOUR BEST ANYWAY.**

FOR YOU SEE, IN THE END,  
IT IS BETWEEN YOU AND GOD.

**IT WAS NEVER BETWEEN  
YOU AND THEM ANYWAY.**

-MOTHER THERESA





## THE BEAUTY OF HOLLAND

**I AM OFTEN ASKED TO DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE OF RAISING A CHILD WITH DISABILITY - TO TRY TO HELP PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT SHARED THAT UNIQUE EXPERIENCE TO UNDERSTAND IT, TO IMAGINE HOW IT WOULD FEEL. IT'S LIKE THIS...**

**WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A BABY, IT'S LIKE PLANNING A FABULOUS TRIP TO ITALY. YOU BUY A BUNCH OF GUIDEBOOKS AND MAKE YOUR WONDERFUL PLANS. THE COLISEUM, THE MICHEL-ANGELO DAVID. THE GONDOLAS IN VENICE. YOU LEARN SOME HANDY PHRASES IN ITALIAN. IT'S ALL VERY, VERY EXCITING!**

**AFTER MONTHS OF EAGER ANTICIPATION, THE DAY FINALLY ARRIVES. YOU PACK YOUR BAGS AND OFF YOU GO. SEVERAL HOURS LATER THE PLANE LANDS. THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT COMES IN AND SAYS, "WELCOME TO HOLLAND."**

**"HOLLAND!!!" YOU SAY, "WHAT DO YOU MEAN HOLLAND! I SIGNED UP FOR ITALY. I'M SUPPOSED TO BE IN ITALY! ALL MY LIFE I'VE DREAMED OF GOING TO ITALY."**

**BUT THERE'S A CHANGE IN THE FLIGHT PLAN. THEY LANDED IN HOLLAND AND YOU MUST STAY. THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THEY HAVEN'T TAKEN YOU TO A HORRIBLE, DISGUSTING, FILTHY PLACE, FULL OF PESTILENCE, FAMINE AND DISEASE. IT'S JUST A DIFFERENT PLACE.**

**SO YOU MUST GO OUT AND BUY NEW GUIDEBOOKS. AND YOU MUST LEARN A WHOLE NEW LANGUAGE. AND YOU WILL MEET A WHOLE NEW GROUP OF PEOPLE YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE MET.**

**IT'S JUST A DIFFERENT PLACE. IT'S SLOWER-PACED THAN ITALY, LESS FLASHY THAN ITALY. BUT AFTER YOU'RE BEEN THERE AWHILE AND CATCH YOUR BREATH, YOU BEGIN TO LOOK AROUND, AND YOU BEGIN TO NOTICE THAT HOLLAND HAS WINDMILLS, HOLLAND HAS TULIPS. HOLLAND EVEN HAS REMBRANDTS.**

**BUT EVERYONE YOU KNOW IS BUSY COMING AND GOING FROM ITALY, AND THEY'RE BRAGGING ABOUT WHAT A WONDERFUL TIME THEY HAD THERE. AND FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE YOU WILL SAY, "YES, THAT'S WHERE I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO. THAT'S WHAT I HAD PLANNED."**

**AND THE PAIN WILL NEVER, EVER GO AWAY, BECAUSE THE LOSS OF THAT DREAM IS A VERY SIGNIFICANT LOSS.**

**BUT IF YOU SPEND YOUR LIFE MOURNING THE FACT YOU DIDN'T GO TO ITALY, YOU MAY NEVER BE FREE TO ENJOY THE VERY SPECIAL, THE VERY LOVELY THINGS ABOUT HOLLAND.**

**SOURCE UNKNOWN**

### Receiving and Giving the Word

**But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Philippians 1:12-14**

Sometimes we suffer attacks from the enemy simply because of our involvement with the word of God. Mark 4:17 speaks of those who hear the Word and endure it for a while, "...then when trouble or persecution arises on account of the Word, they immediately are offended (become displeased, indignant, resentful) and they stumble and fall away." Satan knows the Word will strengthen us and he wants to stop it,

before we can spread it to others. So it's imperative to guard the Word in your heart and resist the devil when he comes to steal it from you. When you do, the trials the enemy brings will actually help bring others to the Lord. The apostle Paul said there were many things that God allowed him to go through simply as object lessons for other people. Even during Paul's imprisonment, his stability and ability to be used by God was evident. If we're to minister to others, we too must face some adverse circumstances. But if we stand in faith and confidence, God will bring us through the victory, and we'll be a great encouragement to others in the process.

**Prayer Starter:** I want to abide in You and Your Word every day. When trials come my way, I pray that You would use them to make me stronger and spread Your Word to those around me.

### Courage to Be Yourself

**In God I will praise his word, In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. Psalm 56:4**

Are you tired of playing games, wearing masks or trying to be someone other than yourself? Wouldn't you like the freedom to just be accepted for who you are, without the pressure to be someone you really don't know how to be? Would you like to learn how to embrace your uniqueness and resist the pull to be like everyone else? If you're going to overcome insecurities and be the person God's called you to be, you must have the courage to be different. Unhappiness and frustration happen when we reject our uniqueness and try

to be like each other. You're going to have to take a chance on not being like everyone else. You must ask yourself, am I a people pleaser or a God pleaser? It's not worth it to try and please man, because God didn't make you to live for other people's approval. God knew what He was doing when He made you. You are a unique individual, God created you the way you are! It's time that you dare to accept yourself as different and stop being insecure about who you are.

**Prayer Starter:** God, I will not fear man. You did not design me to live for the approval of others. Today, I dare to be different. I want to be a God pleaser, living as the unique individual You created me to be.

### Your Life Won't Change Until Your Thinking Changes

**Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Philippians 4:8**

I spent a lot of years unhappy because the minute I woke up in the morning, I started thinking negative, sad, depressing things. Now I can truly say I am fully satisfied since the Holy Spirit has helped me operate with the mind of Christ that is within me. Maybe you've spent years thinking wrong thoughts, but that can change today. If you struggle with negative thinking, it's important for you to come to grips with the fact that your life won't change until your thinking does.

Renewed, God-like thinking is vital for change. The Bible presents a lot of detailed instruction on what kinds of things we should think about. Philippians 4:8 alone tells us to think about things that build us up, not tear us down. I want to issue you a challenge. Instead of waking up in the morning and immediately thinking negative thoughts, I want you to pick a positive truth from scripture and focus on it everyday when you wake up. Let God's Word grow in you and transform your mind. Fix your mind on good things and enjoy the godly changes it brings.

**Prayer Starter:** God, I'm ready to change and live with the mind of Christ. Help me to only think about what is true, honorable, pure, lovely, kind, gracious, virtuous—whatever is of You

### Four Steps for Studying the Word

**My son, attend to my words; Incline thine ear unto my sayings. Proverbs 4:20**

Many people have asked me how to study God's Word. Here are four helpful tips:

1. Purposely set aside time. I make an appointment with God in the mornings, but if that doesn't work for you, find a time that does, even if it's not every day. Just start somewhere and you'll see the positive fruit that this time brings to your life!
2. Make preparation for your Bible study. Choose a place that you enjoy being, a room in your house where you can be alone.
3. Have all your materials available. You'll want your Bible,

of course, but also get a good Bible dictionary, concordance, pen and paper. That way, you don't have to stop every few minutes to reference something or write something down.

4. Prepare your heart. Talk to God about things you may need to confess, and enter your study time peacefully and without anything that may block you from receiving revelation during your study. Take the time to study the Word because there is power in it to change your life and become the person God wants you to be.

**Prayer Starter:** Lord, I purpose in my heart to set aside time to really study Your Word. Teach me how to understand, consent and submit to Your truth in my life every day.

**Old Testament**

There are 39 books in the Old Testament library. There are four types of writing in the Old Testament: Law, History, Poetry, Prophecy.

It is helpful to know which kind of literature you are reading before you start: is it poetry, or is it history?

**LAW**

**Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.**

The first five books of the Bible are sometimes called the Law of Moses. They give many of God's laws about how to live.

**HISTORY**

**Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.**

These 12 historical books cover the occupation of the Promised Land, the time of the Judges, Israel's kings, the fall of the two kingdoms and a return to Jerusalem.

**POETRY**

**Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs.**

Nearly one third of the Old Testament is written in poetry. These five poetical books ask profound questions about evil, pain, love, wisdom and God.

**PROPHECY**

**Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.**

The 17 prophetic books account for almost a quarter of the Bible. They are divided into "Major Prophets" (the first five books) and, "Minor

**New Testament**

There are 27 books in the New Testament library. There are three types of writing in the New Testament: History, Letters, Prophecy.

Before you study a New Testament book it helps to consider what kind of literature you are reading: is it a letter or is it history?

**HISTORY**

**Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts**

The first four books, called gospels, are not like our modern biographies. But they do give four portraits of Jesus. Acts is part two of Luke, about the early church.

**LETTERS**

**PAUL'S LETTERS**

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.

We have 13 of Paul's letters. Except for one personal one, Philemon, they were all written to groups of Christians.

**OTHER LETTERS**

**Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude.**

We don't know who wrote Hebrews. Tradition states that all the writers of the New Testament, except for John, were martyred.

**PHOPHECY**

**Revelation**

Written by the apostle John, this book has seven letters to churches and numerous visions about God.



## CALLING OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

**By [the Spirit] we cry, "Abba, Father." Roman 8:15**

Minutes after US President Harry Truman announced the end of World War II, a phone rang in a small clapboard house in Grandview, Missouri. A ninety-two-year-old woman excused herself to take the call. Her guest heard her say, "Hello....Yes, I'm all right. Yes, I've been listening to the radio....Now you come and see me if you can....Goodbye." The elderly woman returned to her guest. "That was [my son] Harry. Harry's a wonderful man....I knew he'd call. He always call me after something that happens is over."

No matter how accomplished, no matter how old, we yearn to call our parents. To hear their affirming words, "Well done!" We may be wildly successful, but we'll always be their son or daughter.

Sadly, not everyone has this kind of relationship with their earthly parents. But through Jesus, we all can have God as our Father. We who follow Christ are brought into the family of God, for "the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship" (Romans 8:15). We're now "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ." (V. 17). We don't speak to God as a slave but now have the freedom to use the intimate name Jesus used in His hour of desperate need, "Abba, Father" (V. 15; See also Mark 14:36).

Do you have news? Do you have needs? Call the one who is your eternal home. Mike Wittmer

**What news or needs would you love to share with your earthly parents? What can you tell your heavenly Father? He's listening.**

Gracious Father, thank You for being the one to whom I can call on in prayer anytime.

For further study, read Talking with My Father: Jesus Teaches on Prayer at [DiscoverySeries.org/HP171](http://DiscoverySeries.org/HP171).

**Today Scripture:** Romans 8:12-21

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

<sup>18</sup> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

### INSIGHT

Paul wrote the book of Romans to the church in Rome, which he'd never visited. In chapter 8, he outlines two equations showing the consequences of our actions (VV> 12-17). Deeds done according to the flesh—our natural, selfish desires—lead to death (VV. 12-13). In marked contrast is life lived by the Spirit, which leads to life (VV. 13-14). The simplicity of Paul's argument is easy to overlook. When we trust in our own devices and desires, we're walking a path straight to death. When we embrace the power and leading of the Spirit, we find life. J.R. Hudberg

Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan,  
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**Crises/Emergency: Cell phone 860-754-4606**

Cross Street Recovery Ministry the "Hope Line" is in operation 24 hours per day.  
Please call 860-754-4606

if you, a friend and/or a family member are in need of counseling and/or are in crisis,

**PLEASE** dial the "Hope Line". All information will be confidential.

**CROSS STREET MINISTRY OF RECOVERY**

***We can't but through God, all things are possible. How might we pull on God's strength to help each other recover?***

**Let the spirit of God work for you in a Mighty, Mighty Way**

For more information contact:

Church office 860-344-9527.or

Rev. Gregory B. Winborne: Days: 860-616-3834

## How can we experience true freedom in Christ?

Everyone seeks freedom. Especially in the West, freedom is the highest virtue, and it is sought after by all who are, or consider themselves to be, oppressed. But freedom in Christ is not the same as political or economic freedom. In fact, some of the most harshly oppressed people in history have had complete freedom in Christ. The Bible tells us that, spiritually speaking, no one is free. In Romans 6, Paul explains that we are all slaves. We are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. Those who are slaves to sin cannot free themselves from it, but once we are freed from the penalty and power of sin through the cross, we become a different kind of slave, and in that slavery we find complete peace and true freedom.

Although it seems like a contradiction, the only true freedom in Christ comes to those who are His slaves. Slavery has come to mean degradation, hardship, and inequality. But the biblical paradigm is the true freedom of the slave of Christ who experiences joy and peace, the products of the only true freedom we will ever know in this life. There are 124 occurrences in the New Testament of the word *doulos*, which means “someone who belongs to another” or “bondslave with no ownership rights of his own.” Unfortunately, most modern Bible versions, as well as the King James Version, most often translate *doulos* as “servant” or “bond-servant.” But a servant is one who works for wages, and who, by virtue of his work, is owed something from his master. The Christian, on the other hand, has nothing to offer the Lord in payment for his forgiveness, and he is totally owned by the Master who bought him with His shed blood on the cross. Christians are purchased by that blood and are the possession of their Lord and Savior. We are not hired by Him; we belong to Him (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 7:4). So “slave” is really the only proper translation of the word *doulos*.

Far from being oppressed, the slave of Christ is truly free. We have been set free from sin by the Son of God who said, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Now the Christian can truly say, along with Paul, “Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). We now know the truth and that truth has set us free (John 8:32). Paradoxically, through our bondage to Christ, we have also become sons and heirs of the Most High God (Galatians 4:1–7). As heirs, we are partakers of that inheritance—eternal life—which God confers on all His children. This is a privilege beyond any earthly treasure we could ever inherit, while those in bondage to sin inherit only spiritual death and an eternity in hell.

Why, then, do so many Christians live as though they are still in bondage? For one thing, we often rebel against our Master, refusing to obey Him and clinging to our old lives. We hold on to the sins that once bound us to Satan as our master. Because our new nature still lives in the old fleshly nature, we are still drawn to sin. Paul tells the Ephesians to “put off” the old self with its deceit and corruption and “put on” the new self with its righteousness. Put off lying, and put on truthfulness. Put off stealing, and put on usefulness and work. Put off bitterness, rage, and anger, and put on kindness, compassion, and forgiveness (Ephesians 4:22–32). We have been set free from the bondage of sin, but we often put the chains back on because part of us loves the old life.

Furthermore, often we don’t realize that we have been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20) and that we have been reborn as completely new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Christian life is one of death to self and rising to “walk in the newness of life” (Romans 6:4), and that new life is characterized by thoughts about Him who saved us, not thoughts about the dead flesh that has been crucified with Christ. When we are continually thinking about ourselves and indulging the flesh in sins we have been freed from, we are essentially carrying around a corpse, full of rotteness and death. The only way to bury it fully is by the power of the Spirit who is the only source of strength. We strengthen the new nature by continually feeding on the Word of God, and through prayer we obtain the power we need to escape the desire to return to the old life of sin. Then we will realize that our new status as slaves to Christ is the only true freedom, and we will call upon His power to “not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires” (Romans 6:12).

[www.GotQuestions.org](http://www.GotQuestions.org)

### Pastoral Prayer

Lord, help us approach the gate of this sheepfold with confidence. Let us walk through from our fears and doubts to lands of hope and peace, trusting in the Shepherd who seeks us, guides us, and cares for us. In so many of our ways, we are stubborn; yet you gently call our names, reminding us of your eternal love. As we have placed the names of those near and dear to us before you seeking your healing grace, help us remember that we also stand in need of your healing mercies. Help us place our trust in you. Help us reach out to others in confidence because of your love for us. For we ask this in Christ’s name. AMEN.

# Vision: "Level-Up"

**GATHER — CONNECT — GO — GIVE**

We are looking forward to the **next level** that God will take us individually and collectively as a church!!!!

As we continue to move forward it is going to take Unstoppable Faith and a Godly Mindset with every fiber of our being to be determined that we are going to a **next level** in Christ!!!

Let's **Level-Up**!!!! **Level Up** Spiritually!!! **Level-Up** as we Grow Numerically and **Level-Up** as we give Financially!!!

**Level-Up** in allowing God to use the spiritual gifts that God has given us to do ministry!!!

Cross Street let's go to the **next level** together! **Level-Up**!!!

## The Vision Statement in four simple words:

These words are expressing the minimum expectations of members

### Members are to **GATHER**

Every member should attend faithfully a worship service every week. Christians are commanded to worship the Lord together. Read Acts 2:42-47. not only are we called to worship the Lord, but we are also to encourage one another when we gather together.

### Members are to **CONNECT**

That's the word picture to describe locking hands and arms with others. We are called to connect together in a small group (ministry, organizations, class leader system, bible study, Sunday school, and others).

### Members are to **GO**

The members should be involved in at least one ministry in the church each year. Many should be involved in ministries that got them involved outside the walls of the church. The Great Commission should be at the heart of what we do as part of the process of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20).

### Members are to **GIVE**

Every member should be a regular and faithful financial giver to the church. Jesus, Himself, said it best: *"wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be"* (Matthew 6:21).

2023-2024

### Vision: "Level-Up"

Gather - Connect - Go - Give

Bicentennial Anniversary  
Celebrating 200 Years in Ministry

Spiritual Growth in Ministry, Giving and Health and Wellness on Purpose

*"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."* Colossians 2:6-7 (NIV),

It is truly a great blessing to serve as the new Pastor of the Cross Street A.M.E. Zion Church.

As we journey together in this new season at Cross Street it is imperative that we seek to go to the next level in Christ.

God has truly blessed the Cross Street Church!!! We are celebrating 200 years in Ministry!!!

We truly have "Come this Far by Faith" and "We Are Not Tired Yet"!

We are looking forward to the next level that God will take us individually and collectively as a church!!!!

We thank God for the legacy that Presiding Elder Moses L. Harvill and First Lady Eledia Harvill has blessed us with in the last thirty years.

As we continue to move forward it is going to take Unstoppable Faith and a Godly Mindset with every fiber of our being to be determined that we are going to a next level in Christ!!!

Let's Level-Up!!!! Level Up Spiritually!!! Level-Up as we Grow Numerically and Level-Up as we give Financially!!!

Level-Up in allowing God to use the spiritual gifts that God has given us to do ministry!!!

Cross Street let's go to the next level together! Level-Up!!!

Peace and Blessings!



## WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

### Sunday

8:00 a.m. **Church School**  
(see Sunday Church School)  
10:00 p.m. **Worship Service**  
<https://zoom.us/j/959628798>  
Meeting ID: 959 628 798  
(929) 205-6099, Code: 959628798#

Tell your family and friends from  
across the Country.  
We can be watched worldwide.

### Tuesday

#### Bible Study

Time: 6:00 P.M.

Join Zoom Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/562367770>  
(929)205-6099, Code: 562367770#

### Wednesday

#### Day Of Prayer

Prayer Times: 6:00 A.M. 12:00 P.M. &  
6:00 P.M.  
Free Conference Call: 1 (727) 731-4561

### Sunday Church School

**8:00 a.m. – 08:45 a.m.**  
**Adults**

Call-in only: 978-990-5105  
Code: 204730#  
Sister Sylvia Pina / Brother Ken  
Simmons

**10:00 a.m. – 10:45 am**  
**Children: ages 3-12:**

In person, Fellowship Hall  
Ms. Carolyn Smith / Rev. Grant.

**3:00 pm—3:34 pm**  
**Children: ages 9-12**

Call-in: 929-205-6099, Code:  
614890401#.

or  
Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/614890401#>  
Rev. Grant teacher

Any questions call: 860-490-3199  
Gloria Malloy, Church School  
Superintendent.

#### We thank you for your generous giving. Ways you can give:

- Online: [crosstreetamezion.org](https://crosstreetamezion.org)  
1. Realm, (Realm: <https://onrealm.org/TheCross/-/give/TJXKDEVIXE>)  
2. Text 73256 (Thecross)  
3. PayPal,  
4. CASHAPP: \$TheCross440  
5. Mail: P.O. Box 223 Middletown, Ct

- 06457,  
6. Drop off on Sunday 11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.  
7. Call the office for someone to pick up  
8. Church outside Lockbox

(Note: you can find links on the  
website; <http://www.crosstreetamezion.org/Give>)

### Sanctuary Guidelines

There will be one service at 10:00 A.M. The doors will open at 9:45 A.M. to begin temperature check-in. As you enter the building, we request you to sanitize your hands.

If you choose to worship in the Sanctuary, there will be one entrance open, the main doors in the front of the building. The committee and I ask that you follow the guidelines for seating. The pews and floor will be marked to help you do this.

We also kindly request all persons attending to wear a mask over their mouth and nose to prevent the possible spread of illness to the most vulnerable among us. Masks are not required for those under the age of two or for persons unable to remove their masks.

I understand that there has been considerable discussion about masks. Since the scriptures are, of course, silent on the matter, I do not think we need to agree on the substance of the question. It is a matter of personal conscience. However, since some of our more vulnerable brothers and sisters would experience a great deal

of anxiety worshipping with a group of people who are not wearing masks, I ask that you consent to wear a mask for their sake (see 1 Corinthians 8-9 for the principle).

**Worship Outside:** If you prefer to worship outdoors, there will be designated parking and an outside speaker, and you can listen on radio frequency 89.3 F.M. and watch on your phone via zoom, Facebook, or YouTube. During Communion, someone will bring the sacrament to you.

**Livestream Worship:** Finally, we will continue to live-stream the 10:00 A.M. service so that you can watch from your home. If you are experiencing any signs or symptoms of a new illness, including fatigue, fever, chills, difficulty breathing, cough, or nausea, please make use of the live stream and consider contacting your healthcare provider.

**Other Precautions:**  
Since studies seem inconclusive on whether singing increases the risk for viral spread, and since we want to

exercise an abundance of caution at this point in re-opening, if you choose to join the worship and praise team in singing, please keep on your mask.

#### Please refrain from shaking hands and embracing one another at this time.

I understand that some of these precautions may feel burdensome. They are temporary, and, even so, I hope you will join me in giving thanks to God for bringing us back together again and ask him to provide us with patience and kindness for each other.

Much Love to All. Faithfully Yours,  
Pastor Harvill

**Special Note:** For now, we will have service in the Sanctuary every other Sunday (First and 3rd) and 2nd and fourth in the parking lot only, along with Live streaming.

**Please let us know by phone call, letter, or email what else we can do to help you become comfortable returning to in-person worship.**

The Cross Street Journal is published Bi-monthly. It can be found on our website: [crosstreetamezion.org](https://crosstreetamezion.org) & in the front lobby. If you would like a PDF copy sent to you, Email your request to: [ken462012@gmail.com](mailto:ken462012@gmail.com). If you have an article or information (word count 1000 - 1500 or less) for current and future publications the deadline for this information is the Monday after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each Month. **You may submit your information in the following ways:** place the information on a CD (Window format) and leave it in the Cross Street office, E-mail Ken Simmons ([ken462012@gmail.com](mailto:ken462012@gmail.com)), or give it to him. **Praise God!!!**



### CROSS STREET A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

Organized in 1823

440 West Street P.O. Box 223

Middletown, CT 06457

Phone: 860-344-9527 Fax: 860-344-1740

[crossstreetchurch@snet.net](mailto:crossstreetchurch@snet.net)

[www.crossstreetamezion.org](http://www.crossstreetamezion.org)

**Sunday School — See Page 31**

**Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.**

**Rev. Robyn M Anderson**

Pastor

Email: [revrmanderson@gmail.com](mailto:revrmanderson@gmail.com)

**The Rev. Dr. Moses L. Harvill,**

Presiding Elder

**Mrs. Laurenna Crenshaw**

Missionary Supervisor

**The Right Reverend**

**George Crenshaw**

Presiding Prelate

#### Ministerial Staff

Rev. William D. Wilson

Rev. Ella Frances Perry

Rev. Karen Nesmith

Rev. James Battle

Rev. Myrtle Turner

Rev. Gregory Winborne

Rev. Joyce Johnson

Rev. Earlene Grants

Sister Felicia Freeman



## Vision: "Level-Up"

### GATHER — CONNECT — GO — GIVE

#### "I am a Christian"

By Maya Angelou

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not shouting "I'm clean livin'."  
I'm whispering "I was lost,  
Now I'm found and forgiven."

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I don't speak of this with pride.  
I'm confessing that I stumble  
And need Christ to be my guide.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not trying to be strong.  
I'm professing that I'm weak  
And need His strength to carry on.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not bragging of success.  
I'm admitting I have failed  
And need God to clean my mess.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I still feel the sting of pain.  
I have my share of heartaches  
So I call upon His name.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not holier than thou.  
I'm just a simple sinner  
Who received God's good grace,  
somehow!

#### The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13 (KJV)

Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom  
come, Thy will be done in earth, as it  
is in heaven. Give us this day our  
daily bread. And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors. And lead  
us not into temptation, but deliver us  
from evil: For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory, for  
ever. Amen.



Then the Lord answered me and said:  
Write the vision and make it plain on  
tablets, that he may run who reads it.  
Habakkuk 2:2

#### The Jabez Prayer

And Jabez called on the God of Israel  
saying, "Oh, that You would bless me  
**indeed, and enlarge my territory,**  
**that Your hand would keep me from**  
**evil, that I may nor cause pain!**" So  
God granted him what he requested.  
1 Chronicles 4:10 (NKJV)

#### "God's Word

*For the word of God is quick, and power-  
ful, and sharper than any two-edged  
sword, piercing even to the dividing  
asunder of soul and spirit, and of the  
joints and marrow, and is a discerner of  
the thoughts and intents of the heart"*  
Hebrews 4:12

**Prayer:** Forever, O Lord, your Word is  
settled in heaven. I bless you because  
you have given me rest according to  
all that you have promised to me. Not  
one word of all your good promises  
has ever failed. In light of this truth, I  
will walk in your Word at all times.  
I love your Word, Father, it is a lamp  
unto my feet, and a light unto my  
path. All of your words are pure, O  
God, and you are a shield to me. Lord

God, your way is perfect, and your  
Word is tried. You are a shield and a  
mighty buckler to me as I trust in you.  
With your Word you made the heav-  
ens, O Lord. all of your promises are  
yes in Christ, unto your glory, O God.  
You have spoken through your Word  
since ancient times, in order to give  
light to those who sit in darkness, and  
you guide my feet in the way of peace.  
Your Word is quick, alive, and power-  
ful, and sharper than any two-edged  
sword. It pierces even to the dividing  
asunder of my soul and spirit, and of  
my joints and marrow, and is a dis-  
cerner of the thoughts and intents of  
my heart.  
Father, I am thankful for your Word,  
and I will endeavor to walk in the light  
of your Word all the days of my life.

**If you were to die today, do you know where you will spend eternity ???**

#### Doxology

*Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*  
Jude 24-25