

NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

new believer's BIBLE

first steps for new christians



NLT[®]
The Truth Made
CLEAR[™]

presented to

by

on the occasion of

date

The grass withers
and the flowers fade,
but the word of our
God stands forever.

ISAIAH 40:8

new believer's[®] B I B L E

first steps for new christians

GREG LAURIE, GENERAL EDITOR



**New Living
Translation[®]**

SECOND EDITION

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Welcome! . . . A7

A Note to Readers. . . A55

Introduction to the New Living Translation. . . A57

Holy Bible, New Living Translation Bible Translation Team. . . A67

how you can know God

What Is Missing in Our Lives? . . . A11

The Solution: Jesus Christ. . . A13

We Put Jesus on the Cross. . . A15

The Response: Accept God's Offer. . . A16

What God Has Done for You. . . A19

Adopted and Assured. . . A20

READING TRACKS

cornerstones

Who Is God? . . . A23

Who Is Jesus? . . . A24

Who Is the Holy Spirit? . . . A24

Who Is the Devil? . . . A25

What Are Angels? . . . A26

What Are Demons? . . . A27

What Is Heaven? . . . A27

What Is Hell? . . . A28

Love. . . A29

Forgiveness. . . A29

Purity. . . A30

Perseverance. . . A31

Honesty and Integrity. . . A32

Faith and Works. . . A32

Discernment. . . A33

Peace. . . A33

Joy. . . A34

Accountability. . . A35

first steps

Study the Bible. . . A37

Pray. . . A38

Look For and Attend the Right Church. . . A38

Obey God. . . A39

Resist Temptation. . . A40

Live in God's Power. . . A40

Share Your Faith. . . A41

Seek God's Will. . . A42

Live as a Disciple. . . A42

Give to God. . . A43

Have Courage in Trials. . . A44

off and running

Marriage. . . A45

Children. . . A46

Priorities. . . A47

Prayer Time. . . A48

Conversation. . . A48

Relationships. . . A49

Responsibility. . . A49

Job Performance. . . A50

Attitude toward Self. . . A51

big questions

List of Big Questions . . . A53

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis...3	2 Chronicles...373	Daniel...757
Exodus...51	Ezra...405	Hosea...773
Leviticus...89	Nehemiah...415	Joel...783
Numbers...117	Esther...429	Amos...787
Deuteronomy...155	Job...437	Obadiah...795
Joshua...187	Psalms...465	Jonah...797
Judges...211	Proverbs...541	Micah...799
Ruth...233	Ecclesiastes...571	Nahum...805
1 Samuel...237	Song of Songs...579	Habakkuk...809
2 Samuel...265	Isaiah...585	Zephaniah...813
1 Kings...289	Jeremiah...647	Haggai...817
2 Kings...317	Lamentations...705	Zechariah...819
1 Chronicles...345	Ezekiel...713	Malachi...829

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew...837	Ephesians...1063	Hebrews...1111
Mark...875	Philippians...1073	James...1125
Luke...897	Colossians...1079	1 Peter...1131
John...937	1 Thessalonians...1085	2 Peter...1137
Acts...965	2 Thessalonians...1091	1 John...1141
Romans...1003	1 Timothy...1095	2 John...1149
1 Corinthians...1025	2 Timothy...1101	3 John...1151
2 Corinthians...1045	Titus...1105	Jude...1153
Galatians...1057	Philemon...1109	Revelation...1155

CHARTS AND INDEXES

How to Study the Bible...1173
One Year New Testament Reading Plan...1177
52 Great Bible Stories...1183
Memory Verses...1191
Prophecies about Jesus...1199
Glossary of Christian Terms...1201

welcome!

Congratulations! You are holding in your hands the best-selling book in the history of humanity—the Bible. It was given to us by God thousands of years ago. Although the Bible has been around for some time, the wisdom and knowledge contained within are still relevant today. In fact, everything you need to know about God and life is found in the pages of this book. It is the “user’s manual of life” that we all have been searching for.

The Bible does not just teach us about life, though. It also shows us how to come into a *personal* relationship with the very God who inspired this book. This particular Bible contains features that have been specially designed to help you understand, discover, and deepen the personal relationship that God wants to have with you.

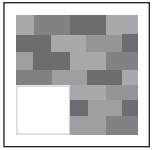
Perhaps you are not yet a believer in Jesus Christ, but you want to know more about Christianity. You may even want to be a believer, but you just don’t know how to become one. In the *New Believer’s Bible*, you will find a section titled “How You Can Know God” (page A11). Here, you will learn how to establish a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

Maybe you have just started in the Christian faith. You are a new believer. Here you will find out how to lay a good foundation for your faith and walk with God in the years ahead.

You may even be a believer who is mature in the faith. Here you will be refreshed and reminded of the essentials of the Christian faith and life.

THE MAIN FEATURES

The *New Believer’s Bible* contains four reading tracks: Cornerstones, First Steps, Off and Running, and Big Questions. Each reading track (except Big Questions) is composed of two kinds of notes: *up-front* and *in-text*. The up-front notes appear before the Bible text and are made up of one to two paragraphs and two to eight numbered points that refer you to Scripture passages and their accompanying in-text notes. (Big Questions is composed of an up-front list of questions and the page numbers you can find them on, and the in-text notes that answer those questions.)



Reading Track One: Cornerstones: Cornerstones—blocks of stone—were traditionally used to start a building's foundation. Likewise, the Cornerstones reading track helps you to begin to lay a solid foundation for your faith. Here you will learn about God's character, Jesus'

life, and the Holy Spirit's role in the lives of believers. Cornerstones also contains notes on the essential Christian character traits that are developed and nurtured by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Some of those traits are love, forgiveness, purity, honesty, wisdom, peace, and joy.



Reading Track Two: First Steps: The phrase *first steps* brings to mind the image of a young child taking his or her first unassisted steps. Like this young child, new believers in Christ need to learn how to walk all over again, so to speak. That is because the Christian life for

most people is a completely new way of living. To help you learn to live this new life, the First Steps reading track gives you valuable building blocks for growing in your faith. Here you will discover the importance and "how to" of studying the Bible, praying, finding the right church, resisting temptation, and seeking God's will for your life.



Reading Track Three: Off and Running: "How does God's Word apply to my everyday life?" This is one of the most widely asked questions about the Bible today. The Off and Running reading track answers this question. Here you will discover how to put your faith into action.

You will see what the Bible has to say about important topics like marriage, parenting, priorities, conversation, and job performance. By helping you apply biblical principles to these aspects of your life, Off and Running takes you to the next level of the Christian life—living it day to day.



Reading Track Four: Big Questions: Life often presents us with difficult situations that cause us to ask hard questions. For instance, you may wonder how a good God could let something bad—like cancer—happen to you. Or you may wonder why Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

Aren't other religions just as good? In the Big Questions reading track, you will find out what the Bible has to say about tough issues. Everything from alternative lifestyles to the second coming of Christ is covered here.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

At the back of the *New Believer's Bible* you will find several features that will help you understand the Bible and your faith better. These features include:

- *How to Study the Bible*—a practical way for you to read through the Bible and a list of questions to ask yourself as you read.
- *One Year New Testament Reading Plan*—an outline for reading the New Testament in five minutes a day in one year.
- *52 Great Bible Stories*—a list of well-known Bible stories, where you can find them, and the main lesson you can get out of them.
- *Memory Verses*—a list of key Bible verses to commit to memory.
- *Prophecies about Jesus*—a list of Old Testament passages that contain prophecies about Jesus, and the New Testament references that record his fulfillment of those prophecies.
- *Glossary of Christian Terms*—a quick-reference guide to help you understand the meanings of words like *atonement*, *justification*, *redemption*, and *sanctification*.

HOW TO USE THE READING TRACKS

The *New Believer's Bible* is easy to use. Simply turn to page A23 and begin reading the “Who Is God?” up-front note in the “Cornerstones” reading track. Look up the Scripture passages and in-text notes referred to at the end of this note. After you have read all the Scripture passages and in-text notes for “Who Is God?” move on to the next up-front note (“Who Is Jesus?”) and begin the process over again.

You can read one up-front note and its Scripture passages and in-text notes a day. Or, if you prefer, browse through the table of contents and choose the topic(s) that interests you the most for your daily reading.

Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.” God wants his Word to permeate every area of your life—your home, your business, your play time as well as your prayer time. So open your Bible and your heart, and God will speak to you from these pages. Don't let anything keep you from spending time each day in God's Word.

Greg Laurie



what is missing in our lives?

Purpose, meaning, a reason for living—these are all things we desire and search for in life. Despite steps each one of us takes to find purpose and meaning in life, we still feel empty, unfulfilled. That is because there is a spiritual emptiness in each of our lives. We

each have a hole in our heart, a spiritual vacuum deep within our soul—a “God-shaped blank.” Possessions won’t fill this hole, nor will success. Relationships alone cannot satisfy this emptiness, and morality, in and of itself, falls miserably short of occupying this space. In fact, even religion cannot fill the void in our heart.

There is only one way to effectively fill that void. This way will not only help us to have a life that is full and rich on this earth, but—more important—will give us the absolute hope of spending eternity in the presence of God. Before we can truly appreciate this good news, though, we need to understand the bad news, which is a serious problem we all have.

the problem: sin The Bible clearly identifies our serious problem as sin. Sin is not just an act but the actual nature of our being. In other words, we are not sinners because we sin. Rather, we sin because we are sinners! We are born with a nature to do wrong. King David, an Old Testament Israelite ruler, wrote, “For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). Because we are born sinners, sinning comes to all of us

naturally. That is why it is futile to think that the answer to all of life's problems comes from "within." According to the Bible, the *problem* is within! Scripture tells us, "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

We are not basically good—we are basically sinful. This sinfulness spills out into everything we do. Every problem we experience in our society today can be traced back to our refusal to live God's way. Clear back to the Garden of Eden, Adam made his choice, and he suffered the consequences of it, setting the pattern that all humanity would follow. The Bible explains, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. . . . Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone" (Romans 5:12, 18).

"That's not fair!" you may protest. Why should we suffer because of what someone else has done? Yet, given the opportunity, each one of us would have done the same thing as Adam. In fact, not a single day passes that we do not face the same test that was set before Adam. God has given us the freedom to choose between two separate paths: the path that leads to life and the path that leads to death. The Bible says, "Today, I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

without a leg to stand on Someone may say, "But I live a good life. I try to be kind and considerate to others. I live by the Ten Commandments." But the truth of the matter is that the Ten Commandments, or the law, as they are called in the Bible, were not given to make us good but to show us how bad we are. The Bible tells us, "No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are" (Romans 3:20). The purpose of the law is to make us realize how sinful we are. You might say that God's law was given to "shut our mouths" and show us that we desperately need his help and forgiveness for our terminal condition as sinners.

Look at the passages below to get a better understanding of the nature and seriousness of sin.

1. We Have All Missed the Mark (see Romans 3:23, page 1006). Romans 3:23 says, we have *all* sinned. For those who would claim to be the sole exception to this eternal truth, verse ten of this chapter plainly says, "No one is righteous—not even one" (Romans 3:10). Another word for *righteous* is *good*. The word *righteous* means, "One who is as he or she ought to be." When the Bible says that no one is righteous, or good, it is not so much referring to behavior but to inner character.

What exactly is “God’s glorious standard” that Romans 3:23 says we have failed to meet? God’s “glorious standard” is absolute perfection. Jesus said, “But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In other words, anyone who is not as good as God is not acceptable to him.

One definition of *sin*, derived from the Greek word *hamartia*, is to “miss the mark.” As far as the mark of perfection goes, we miss it by a mile. Although our sinful nature makes it impossible for us to live up to God’s standard, we cannot blame sin on our nature alone. Sin is also a deliberate act.

2. Sin Is a Deliberate Act (see Ephesians 2:1-3, page 1064). Another word for *sins* in Ephesians 2:1 is *transgressions* or *trespasses*. This word speaks of a lapse or deviation from truth. In contrast to simply “missing the mark,” this is a deliberate action. Because sin is a deliberate action, we cannot blame our sin on our society or our environment or our mental or physical state. Everyone has chosen to do what was wrong. If we protest this point, “we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth” (1 John 1:8).

3. The Ultimate Penalty for Sin Is Death (see Romans 6:23, page 1011). According to the Bible, we have offended a Holy God. We have not done this once or twice, but so many times that we are unable to keep count. Romans 6:23 says, “The *wages* of sin is death. . . .” *Wages* are something you are paid for work rendered. In other words, you earn your wages. Because we have all repeatedly sinned, we have earned the penalty of death, which is eternal torment and punishment in a place called hell.

Amid all this talk about sin and death, there is some good news. God has given us a way to escape the penalty of our sin. He has made it possible for us to have a relationship with him and enjoy the hope of eternal life without punishment.



the solution: Jesus Christ

God understood our problem and knew that we could do nothing about it. Because God loves us, he sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to bridge the chasm of sin that separates us from him.

why Jesus can bridge the gap There has never been anyone like Jesus. For starters, Jesus was not conceived in the womb of his mother through natural means. Rather, he was supernaturally conceived in the womb of a young virgin named Mary. Because of his supernatural conception, Jesus, who is wholly God, also became wholly human.

Though Jesus is God, he chose to lay aside the privileges of his deity to live on earth as a man. The Bible, describing the sacrifice Christ made in becoming a man, says that Jesus “gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). It is extremely important to note that Jesus did not cease to be God when he came to earth. He simply laid aside his divine privileges and walked the earth as a man. In doing so, he was personally able to experience the gamut of human emotions, ranging from happiness to deep sorrow. He felt what it was like to be tired, cold, and hungry.

Moreover, he came to this earth with a clear objective in mind: to bridge that gap between us and God.

When the Israelites of the Old Testament sinned, they would have the high priest go into the Temple and offer an animal sacrifice to God to atone for their sins. In a symbolic sense, this was a way of putting one’s sins on the animal, which stood in the place of the guilty person. The Bible teaches, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

The sacrificial rituals carried out by the Israelites in the Old Testament foreshadowed what Jesus would do when he came to this earth. He took the sin of the world upon himself when he hung on the cross so many years ago.

Numerous Old Testament prophecies pointed not only to his birth and life but also to his death, including the way in which he would die.

Jesus knew from the beginning that he had come expressly to die for the sins of humanity. He also knew that this sacrifice would be made on a Roman cross. He began his final journey to the cross of Calvary at a place called Caesarea Philippi, and he often spoke of his impending death with his disciples. Scripture records, “From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead” (Matthew 16:21).

He was eventually arrested on false charges after Judas Iscariot, one of his own disciples, betrayed him. But it was no accident. If humanity was going to be put in touch with God and have the barrier that separated them removed, something drastic had to be done. In essence, with one hand Jesus took hold

of a Holy God, and with the other hand he took hold of the sinful human race. As crude nails were pounded into his hands, he bridged the gap for us!

We must not forget, however, that three days after his crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead! If it is true that “you can’t keep a good man down,” then it is even truer that you can’t keep the “God-man” down



we put Jesus on the cross

The necessity of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross shows just how radical our situation was as fallen people. It’s been said that you can tell the depth of a well by how much rope is lowered. When we look at “how much rope was lowered” from heaven, we realize how grave our situation really was.

For that reason, don’t blame the people of that day for putting Jesus on the cross. We are just as guilty as they. In reality, it was not the Roman soldiers who put him on the cross, nor was it the Jewish leaders: it was our sins that made it necessary for Jesus to volunteer for this torturous and humiliating death.

Read the verses and notes below to see exactly what Jesus did for us.

1. *The Greatest Demonstration of Love* (see Romans 5:6-8, page 1009).

Jesus did not die for us while we were his friends but while we were his enemies, opposing him by our sinfulness. Yet, in spite of all of this, God demonstrated his love for us by dying on the cross. In this verse, the apostle Paul explains that Jesus did not simply die for humanity as a whole but that he died for us as individuals. Elsewhere, Paul writes, “[Christ] loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Whenever you are tempted to doubt God’s love for you, take a long look at the cross on which Jesus died. Then realize that, for all practical purposes, it was not nails that held him to the cross, but love.

2. *Forsaken That We Might Be Forgiven* (see Luke 23:32-49, page 935).

Many of us have heard this story at some point in our lives. Yet the significance behind this heart-wrenching scene is often missed or misunderstood. This was not simply some “good teacher” being crucified for his beliefs. It was God in human form who hung on that cross, bridging the gap between sinful people and a holy God.

Matthew's Gospel tells us that when Jesus hung on that cross, he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matthew 27:46). Many Bible scholars believe that those words marked the precise moment at which God placed the sins of the world upon his Son. The Bible, speaking of God, says, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness" (Habakkuk 1:13, NKJV). For that reason, the holy Father had to "turn his face" and pour out his wrath upon his own Son. On the cross, Jesus received the wages that were due us. He was not heard that we might be heard. The ear of God was closed to Jesus for a time that it might never be closed to us.

3. Christ, the Sole Mediator (see 1 Timothy 2:5-6, page 1096). Why is there only one mediator who is qualified to bridge the gap between God and people? Haven't there been other religious leaders who have claimed to have *the* way to God? Haven't some of them also died as a result of their message?

While the answers to these questions may be yes, the truth is that not one of these other leaders was fully God and fully human. That is why Jesus is uniquely qualified to deal with sin. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Acts 4:12 tells us, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." And, most important, Jesus Christ rose from the dead!

Though it is true that you must believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins in order to receive eternal life and be a true Christian, there is still something else you must do.



the response: accept God's offer

To know Jesus Christ personally and have your sins forgiven, you must believe that you are a sinner separated from God and that your only hope is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came and died for your sins. To stop here, however, would be to stop short of salvation.

There are two things you must now do to enter into a relationship with the God from whom you have been separated.

1. Turn From Your Sins. As Jesus began his public ministry, his first message was "Repent of your sins" (Mark 1:15). In essence, Jesus was telling the

people to repent—to acknowledge their sinning, change their minds, and change the direction of their lives.

Look at it this way. In the past, we have been blinded by our sins, causing us to run from God. As we repent, we do a “U-turn” and start running toward him. It is not enough just to be sorry for our sins. We must also change our lifestyle, for the Bible teaches that “The kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin” (2 Corinthians 7:10). In other words, if you are really sorry for something, it will result in a change in your actions.

The apostle Paul summed up this change succinctly when he quoted Jesus, who had said that people must “turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me” (Acts 26:18).

You see, there are some things only God can do and some things only you can do. Only God can remove your sins and give you the gift of eternal life, but only you can turn from your sins and receive Jesus as your Savior. That brings up the second thing you must do to respond to God’s offer.

2. Believe in Jesus Christ and Receive Him into Your Life. Having seen the enormity of your sin and decided to turn from it, you then must believe in and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Becoming a Christian, however, is far more than following a creed or trying to live by certain standards. Jesus said that you must be “born again,” or more literally, “born from above” (John 3:3). This spiritual rebirth happens when we personally believe in Jesus Christ, receive him by inviting him into our lives, and turn from our sins. In other words, we ask Jesus to come and take residence in our lives, making the changes he deems necessary. A person must take this all-important step in order to become a child of God.

Notice that this offer is yours for the asking, and it is free. You don’t have to work for it, trying to clean up your life before you make this life-changing decision. The Bible says, “The free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Being a Christian also means having a relationship with the living God. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said, “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” To better understand the meaning of this verse, it is important to understand the culture at the time it was written. Eating together in Bible times was a long, drawn-out affair. People would not sit on chairs behind tables in a formal setting as we do, but they would sit on the floor, reclining on pillows around a low table. The relaxed atmosphere made meals a time when you would not only satisfy your appetite but also receive a gratifying

serving of enjoyable table conversation. You would share your heart and life with those who sat beside you.

Consequently, when Jesus says that he will “share a meal” with us, it implies intimacy, closeness, and friendship. He offers this to us, but we must first “hear him calling” us.

To hear God calling us, we must know how he speaks. One way in which God speaks to us is described in the Bible as a “still, small voice.” This could be described in another way as that tug you might have felt on your heart from the Holy Spirit showing you your need for Jesus. He may even be speaking to you right now! It is at that point that you must “open the door.” Only you can do that. Jesus will not force his way in.

Receiving Jesus Christ into Your Heart. If you are ready to turn from your sins and believe in Jesus Christ so that you can receive the forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life, then take a moment to bow your head and pray a prayer like this one right now:

God, I'm sorry for my sin. I turn from it right now. I thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sin.

Jesus, I ask you to come into my heart and life right now. Be my Lord, Savior, and friend. Help me to follow you all the days of my life as your disciple.

Thank you for forgiving and receiving me right now. Thank you that my sin is forgiven and that I am going to heaven. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Rededicating Your Life to Jesus Christ. Perhaps you are already a Christian but you have strayed from Jesus Christ. You have been a prodigal son or daughter. God will forgive you right now if you will return to him. He tells us in Scripture, “My wayward children . . . come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts” (Jeremiah 3:22). If you would like to return to God and rededicate your life to him right now, you may want to pray something like this:

God, I am sorry for my sin. I am sorry that I have strayed from you. I ask you to forgive me now as I repent of my sin. I don't want to live like a prodigal any longer.

Renew and revive me as I once again follow you as my God. Thank you for your forgiveness. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Whether you prayed to make a first time commitment or a recommitment, you have made the right decision. God has forgiven and received you if you really meant it. Know that your relationship with Jesus Christ will bring radical and

dramatic changes in your life. Describing this, the Bible says, “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Now that is good news! But more importantly, God has changed your eternal destiny. Instead of fearing an eternal punishment in a place called hell, you will spend peaceful eternity in his presence in heaven.

Read the next section to see what else God has done for you now that you have taken this step.



what God has done for you

What actually happens when Jesus Christ comes into your life? First, he saves you from your sins and the punishment you deserve as a result of them—eternity in hell. This is called salvation, or regeneration, and has to do with what takes place in your heart: God gives you new life.

Second, he justifies you. Justification has to do with your standing before God and includes the complete removal and forgiveness of your sins. Think about it! When you receive Jesus Christ into your life, you are completely forgiven. God’s Word tells us, “Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God [justified]—something the law of Moses could never do” (Acts 13:38-39). Speaking of our sins, God says, “I will never again remember [your] sins and lawless deeds” (Hebrews 10:17). What a wonderful promise!

Justification, however, is more than just the forgiveness and removal of the guilt and condemnation that accompany sin. While God has removed your sins and forgiven you of them, he has also placed the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ “into your account,” so to speak. You don’t have to earn it or try to achieve it. It is yours as a gracious gift from the God who loves you. To understand justification more fully, read the following Scripture passages and notes below.

- 1. God Promises Us His Gracious Forgiveness** (see 1 John 1:9, page 1141). The word *confess* means “to say the same thing as another” or “to agree with.” To confess means that we are agreeing with God about our sin. We are seeing it as he does. We know that God hates sin. Therefore, to truly

confess our sin means that we essentially feel the same way God feels about what we have done. After committing that sin, we will be determined to put it out of our lives and never do it again. That is true confession in the biblical sense. The reason many believers are not experiencing the forgiveness and joy they desire is that they have not yet truly confessed! Once we have met God's conditions, however, we will know his gracious forgiveness. We may not "feel" forgiven, but we are. We have his word on it.

2. God Has Balanced Our Moral and Spiritual Budget (see Romans 5:1-2, page 1009). When God makes us right in his sight, he does so by placing all of the righteousness of Christ to our credit. This balances the moral and spiritual budget for us. We now have sufficient "capital of character" to get on with the business of living.

Up to this point, salvation has been God's responsibility. From this point on, it continues to be his responsibility except that we are responsible for the wise investment of our "capital of character"—that is, we are responsible for living as God desires us to. It is as if your checking account were empty, but then someone made a \$100,000 deposit. What you do with that money is up to you.

3. God Calls Us His Children (see Luke 15:11-32, page 922). This incredible story illustrates what happens when a person turns from sin and returns to God. First, notice that the father in the story did not give this prodigal son what he deserved—banishment. In the same way, we do not receive from God what we deserve—punishment for sin. Second, the young man was given what he did not deserve—the rights and privileges of full sonship. Likewise, although we are not worthy to be called children of God, he calls us sons and daughters. In summary, he doesn't give us what we deserve (judgment). He gives us what we don't deserve (forgiveness and justification).

Speaking of sons and daughters, read on to see how God has adopted you into his family.



adopted and assured

We have looked at what happens when we are regenerated (when Christ comes into our lives) and when we are justified (when God forgives our sin and puts his righteousness in its place). Now let us look at another incredible thing God has done for us. He has adopted us into his family as his children!

Adoption means "to be given the rights of a son." In

essence, you have been given the full rights of sonship in the family of God as though you were born that way. The story of the Prodigal Son illustrates this (Luke 15:11-32). The wayward son thought that after leaving home, he would no longer be considered a son but would instead be treated as a hired servant. Much to his surprise, when he made the long journey home, his father welcomed him and smothered him with kisses. He then gave orders to bring out the best robe and to put a ring on his finger, signifying full rights as a son. That is exactly what God has done for you! Take some time now to examine three Scripture passages that assure you of your adoption into God's family.

1. *God Disciplines His Children* (see Hebrews 12:5-9, page 1122).

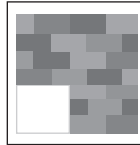
Recognizing you are now a child of God is not some distant hope but a present reality. One of the ways God will remind you of this is by correcting you and bringing you back into line like a loving father when you stray away from him.

Before we were believers, we may have felt no sense of guilt for certain things we did or did not do. But now that we are Christians, God's Holy Spirit shows us the way to live, which includes correcting us. He does this not because he hates us but because he loves us as his own dear children. Understanding this truth should help us in the way we behave.

2. *You Have an Approachable Father* (see Galatians 4:6, page 1060). The Aramaic word translated "dear Father" is *abba*, which is a word of affection that a young child would use endearingly toward his or her father. A western equivalent of that phrase would be "papa" or "daddy." God does not want to be viewed as some distant, uninterested father but as a loving, approachable father to whom you can turn at any time because you are his child.

3. *His Promises Are Not Based upon Your Feelings* (see 1 John 5:11-13, page 1147). There will be times as a Christian when you may not "feel" God's presence. You may even be tempted to doubt that he has come into your life. But 1 John 5:13 does not say, "I write this to you who believe in the Son of God so that you may *feel* you have eternal life." This is because feelings come and go. They fluctuate. Nor does the Bible say, "I write this so that you may *hope*—if God is in a really good mood—that you have eternal life." It says, "so that you may *know*. . . ." Eternal life is yours! Stand on God's promise to you. You are forgiven, justified, adopted into his family, and assured of salvation. Now that is reason to rejoice!

To find out more about God, turn to "Who Is God?" on the next page in the Cornerstones section.



who is God?

Thousands of years ago, Pharaoh, the Egyptian ruler, posed a question people are still asking today: “Who is the LORD that I should listen to him?” That’s a good question, but it is not an easy subject to tackle. It is difficult for our limited minds to grasp the limitless, eternal God. It has been said, “If God were small enough for your minds, he wouldn’t be big enough for your needs.” For that reason, don’t be exasperated if you can’t fully understand who God is or why he does certain things. One day, Scripture promises, everything about God and his character will be made perfectly clear to us (1 Corinthians 13:12). But until then, we will find everything we need to know about him in his Word. Look up the following notes and passages to find out who God is.

- 1. God Is All-Knowing, Ever-Present, and All-Powerful.** The Creator of the Universe knows every intimate detail of his creation (see Psalm 139:1-24, page 536).
- 2. God Is Holy.** God’s incomparable holiness merits our worship (see Isaiah 6:1-8, page 592).
- 3. God Is Loving and Just.** God’s justice is tempered by his love (see 2 Peter 3:3-9, page 1138).
- 4. God Is Personal.** This characteristic of God sets him apart from the so-called “gods” of other religions (see Acts 17:22-33, page 992).
- 5. God Is in Control.** It is important to remember that God is still in control, even if things around us seem to be in chaos (see Habakkuk 3:2-19, page 810).
- 6. The God of the Bible Is the One True God.** While some insist on the existence of many gods, only the God of the Bible is the true, living God, worthy of our devotion (see Isaiah 45:9-23, page 624).

who is Jesus?

Throughout history many people have attempted to answer this question. Some have done so accurately, but many have not. Our best source for answering this question is—once again—God’s own Word. The Bible presents us with some inescapable truths about Jesus that demand a response. Anyone who seriously studies Scripture to learn more about Jesus must answer two probing questions: (1) What do you think of Jesus Christ? and (2) Who is he? The writer C. S. Lewis made this observation: “You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (*Mere Christianity*, rev. ed. [New York: Macmillan, 1952], 41).

Jesus was not just a good man. He was—and is—the God-man. Let’s examine what the Bible has to say about Jesus.

- 1. *Jesus Is Human.*** Jesus became our supreme example as God in human form (see Philippians 2:5-11, page 1074).
- 2. *Jesus Is Divine.*** Even though Jesus became human, he still remained God (see Colossians 1:15-20, page 1080).
- 3. *Jesus Had a Specific Mission to Accomplish.*** Jesus came to save humankind from sin (see Luke 4:16-21, page 904).
- 4. *Jesus Made the Ultimate Sacrifice.*** Jesus endured tremendous pain so that we could enjoy eternity with him (see Isaiah 53:1-12, page 632).
- 5. *Jesus Has Great Power to Transform People.*** Jesus can change the most unlikely person into one of the most powerful witnesses on his behalf (see Acts 4:1-13, page 970).
- 6. *Jesus Has an Eternal Dominion.*** Jesus’ Kingdom extends beyond the boundaries of space and time (see Revelation 1:4-8, page 1156).

who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the most mysterious member of the Trinity, which includes God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Spirit (or the Holy Spirit). Many struggle with the idea of God being three persons, yet one. Quite honestly, we will never fully grasp the concept this side of heaven.

Some, however, have wrongly thought of the Holy Spirit as more of an “it” than a “he.” That is probably due in part to biblical descriptions of him as being like the wind or coming upon Jesus in the form of a dove, among other comparisons.

Yet these descriptions must be balanced with the descriptions of the other members of the Trinity. For instance, Jesus referred to himself as “the bread of life” and “the good shepherd.” In the same way, God the Father is referred to as “a refuge” and “a consuming fire.” Does this mean that Jesus is a loaf of bread or a sheep farmer, or that the Father is a pile of rocks or a blast furnace? Of course not! These are simply metaphors used in Scripture to help communicate God’s character. Likewise, the unique descriptions attributed to the Holy Spirit do not imply that the Holy Spirit is merely some “force” or “power.” Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He will tell you about the future” (John 16:13). Note the use of the pronoun *he*. The Holy Spirit has a distinct personality, and he also has specific work that he wants to do in our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. Explore what the Bible says about him.

- 1. *Whom the Holy Spirit Helps.*** The Holy Spirit strengthens and empowers followers of Christ (see Acts 2:1-41, page 968).
- 2. *How the Holy Spirit Works with the Father and the Son.*** The Holy Spirit works alongside God the Father and Jesus, God’s Son, to make our lives pleasing to God (see 1 Peter 1:2, page 1132).
- 3. *Why God Gives Us the Holy Spirit.*** The Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives is God’s mark of ownership (see Ephesians 1:13-14, page 1064).
- 4. *How the Holy Spirit Works in Our Lives.*** The Holy Spirit draws us to Christ, enters our lives at conversion, and empowers us as we allow him to work in our lives (see John 14:15-17, page 956).
- 5. *When the Holy Spirit Can Be Sinned Against.*** There are six specific ways we can sin against the Holy Spirit (see Acts 5:1-10, page 974).
- 6. *Why Christians Need the Holy Spirit.*** Living the Christian life is impossible without the Holy Spirit’s help (see Galatians 5:16-26, page 1058).

who is the devil?

What is the devil like? Does he really look like the red-suited, pitchfork-holding cartoon caricature seated on a throne in hell? Or does he roam through the earth disguised as an angel of light?

Unfortunately, far too many people do not have an accurate view of who the devil is. Many underestimate him and his prowess, even going so far as to doubt his very existence. Someone once asked the great evangelist Charles Finney, “Mr. Finney, do you believe in a literal devil?” Finney replied, “You try opposing him for a while, and you see if he’s literal or not.” You will find out how literal the devil is the moment you make a commitment to Jesus Christ.

The Bible clearly shows us just how active and conniving the devil really is. At the same time, Scripture also lets us know about the devil's limitations and ultimate demise. The more we understand the tactics of this intelligent spirit being, the better equipped we will be to ward off his attacks. Below are some key passages of Scripture that answer some of the most commonly asked questions about the devil—who is also referred to as Satan.

- 1. *Where Did Satan Come From?*** Satan's pride led to his fall from heaven (see Ezekiel 28:12-19, page 736).
- 2. *What Are Satan's Abilities?*** Satan does have the power and access to do certain things in this world (see 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, page 1048).
- 3. *What Are Satan's Limitations?*** While we should not underestimate Satan's power, we should realize that it is limited (see Job 1:1–2:10, page 438).
- 4. *How Does Satan Attack People?*** Satan masterfully uses manipulation and distortion to deceive people (see Genesis 3:1-7, page 6).
- 5. *Who Can Thwart Satan's Agenda?*** Those who lay down their lives for Christ will defeat this evil foe (see Revelation 12:10-12, page 1164).

what are angels?

According to recent surveys, most people believe in the existence of angels. A glut of books on the subject fills bookstore shelves. Still, our only reliable source on angels and their activity is the Bible. Just who are these mysterious creatures? What do they look like? Do they wear long, flowing robes and have large birdlike wings? And what is their purpose?

You might call angels "God's secret agents." They basically work undercover. Most of the time these secret agents remain invisible—except on those special occasions when God allows people to see them. No doubt God realized that if we were allowed to see them all of the time, they would become an object of our worship, which is to be reserved for God alone. Let's take some time to see what the Bible has to say about angels and their role in this world.

- 1. *Why Did God Create Angels?*** God created angels as unique spiritual beings who worship Christ and care for his followers (see Hebrews 1:4-14, page 1112).
- 2. *What Do Angels Do in the Life of a Christian?*** God has ordered the angels to protect his followers and keep them from harm (see Psalm 91:1-16, page 512).

- 3. How Are Angels Involved in Our Prayers?** Our prayers can trigger spiritual warfare (see Daniel 10:1–11:1, page 768).
- 4. What Role Will Angels Play in the End Times?** Angels will play a strategic role in spreading the everlasting gospel (see Revelation 14:6–7, page 1166).

what are demons?

Just as there are angels who look out for your welfare, there are angels who are bent upon your destruction. The Bible teaches that when Satan fell from heaven, he took one-third of the angels with him (Revelation 12:4). Although we do not know their exact number, Scripture tells us there are multitudes (Luke 2:13) and legions (Matthew 26:53) of angels. So Satan has a sizable, highly organized force under his control. These fallen angels, also known as demons, help Satan accomplish his purpose, which, in the words of Christ, is to steal, kill, and destroy. While the Bible does not give us specific details as to how demons work, we can be confident that everything we need to know about them is found in Scripture. We do not need to look elsewhere for insights into the spiritual world. See what God's Word has to say about these evil agents.

- 1. What Do Demons Believe?** Strange as it may seem, demons acknowledge that there is only one God (see James 2:19, page 1130).
- 2. Can Demons Personally Harm You?** Those people who have a true relationship with Christ cannot be overcome by demons; those who do not are “fair game” for these servants of Satan (see Acts 19:13–20, page 994).
- 3. What Makes Demons Powerless?** The name of Jesus used by the followers of Jesus makes the demons tremble (see Luke 10:1–20, page 914).

what is heaven?

The Bible gives us wonderful, vivid descriptions of heaven. From Scripture we know that heaven's streets are made of gold, and that pain, fear, and sorrow are not present there. But even with all of this detail, we still fall short of understanding “the big picture.” That is because it is difficult for us to grasp the absolute perfection and glory of heaven.

All splendor aside, though, what truly makes heaven spectacular is that we will be forever in God's presence. As the psalmist so poignantly expressed, “You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever” (Psalm 16:11).

While we may not be able to have all of our questions about heaven answered here on earth, the Bible does answer some of our most probing questions.

- 1. Who Will Enter Heaven?** Heaven is a place for those who have received Jesus Christ as Lord (see John 14:2-6, page 954).
- 2. When Does a Christian Enter Heaven?** When we take our last breath on earth, we will take our first breath in heaven (see 2 Corinthians 5:6-9, page 1050).
- 3. Will We Recognize People in Heaven?** While our heavenly bodies may resemble our earthly bodies, we will in some ways be like the angels (see Matthew 22:23-33, page 866).
- 4. What Will Life in Heaven Be Like?** Our lives in heaven will no longer be consumed by the cares of this life, but we will be filled with joy being in the presence of our heavenly Father (see Revelation 7:13-17, page 1160).

what is hell?

According to the Bible, you have two options to choose from when it comes to deciding where you will spend your life after death. One option is heaven. The other is hell. Interestingly enough, while there seems to be an increased belief in a place called hell, most people don't believe they are headed there. Instead, they believe that hell is reserved for only the most hardened of criminals and other "evil" elements of our society. But God's Word judges people by a different set of criteria. You are not sent to hell for being a bad person any more than you are sent to heaven for being a good person. We all deserve to spend eternity in hell (Romans 3:22-23).

While God clearly says that those who reject the salvation offered through his Son, Jesus Christ, will spend eternity in this place of torment, he repeatedly gives each person ample opportunity to choose life—abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven (2 Peter 3:9). If you haven't made that choice yet, or if you have decided and want a better understanding of what your nonbelieving friends will have to face, consider these facts about hell from the pages of Scripture.

- 1. What Is Hell Like?** Hell is a place of unending, isolated torment (see Luke 16:19-31, page 924).
- 2. Who Will Go to Hell?** Those whose names do not appear in the Book of Life are destined to everlasting punishment (see Revelation 20:11-15, page 1170).
- 3. What Is the Worst Punishment of Hell?** Hell's worst punishment is everlasting separation from God's presence (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, page 1092).

love

On one occasion Jesus was asked what commandment was the most important. He replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:29-31).

These are the two most important commandments because if you truly love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, you will want to do what pleases him. In the same way, if you really love others as much as you love yourself, you will be concerned for their welfare and will treat them accordingly. Before you can effectively love God, however, you must first realize how much he loves you.

Scripture explains that God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners who had no relationship with him (Romans 5:8). The more we realize this wonderful truth, the more our love for God will grow. The Bible correctly recognizes that our love for God comes as a result of his loving us first (1 John 4:19). These Scripture passages explore some different facets of the love we should have for God and for others.

- 1. God Should Be the Greatest Love of Our Lives.** Before we can fully love one another, however, we must fully love God and understand his love for us (see Deuteronomy 6:4-5, page 160).
- 2. Christ's Love Sets the Standard.** Our love for others should model Christ's love for us (see Ephesians 5:2, page 1070).
- 3. Love Surpasses All Spiritual Gifts.** A Christian who understands what love truly means and shows love in his or her life is the greatest testimony to others (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, page 1042).
- 4. Our Love for God Prepares Us for Service.** The depth of our love for God directly affects our ability to minister to others (see John 21:15-17, page 962).
- 5. Our Love for Others Mirrors the Condition of Our Heart.** The love we have for those around us is an indication of the strength of our Christian walk (see 1 John 2:9-11, page 1142).
- 6. Our Love Should Grow.** The closer we grow to God, the more our love for others should increase (see 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, page 1086).

forgiveness

One of the great principles of the Christian life is forgiveness. Jesus modeled this principle for us when he hung on the cross and prayed for the very people who had put him there (see Luke 23:34, page 935). His words were so powerful and

unexpected that they brought about the conversion of one of the thieves hanging on a cross next to him.

Because Jesus completely forgave us, he wants us to follow his example by forgiving others. As Scripture says: “Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children” (Ephesians 4:32–5:1). The Bible gives us several important characteristics of the forgiveness we should have for others.

- 1. *Forgiveness First Comes from God.*** Our forgiving others should flow from God’s forgiving us (see Mark 11:25, page 890).
- 2. *Forgiveness Knows No Limits.*** For a Christian, no wrong is too great or too small to forgive (see Matthew 18:21–35, page 862).
- 3. *Forgiveness Is Not Selective.*** You can’t choose to forgive some people and not forgive others (see Matthew 5:43–48, page 844).
- 4. *Forgiveness Breaks Down Walls.*** When you choose to forgive, you experience true freedom (see Genesis 45:1–15, page 44).

purity

Purity is a quality we hear too little about today. Usually when we do hear something about purity, it is in reference to sexual purity. But purity goes beyond this to include wholesome thoughts, a sincere desire to do what is right, and a commitment to obey God’s Word. Jesus alluded to the importance of purity by promising that those whose hearts were pure would see God (Matthew 5:8). In using the word heart, Jesus was saying that the center of our being—our will, our emotions, and our thought processes—needs to be cleansed of sin. The Bible texts below examine the idea of purity and how it affects us as followers of Jesus Christ.

- 1. *Don’t Place Yourself in the Way of Unnecessary Temptation.*** Know your moral weaknesses and avoid situations where the temptation to sin would be irresistible (see 2 Samuel 11:1–12:14, page 274).
- 2. *Guard the Content of Your Thoughts.*** Don’t fill your mind with the world’s moral filth (see 2 Timothy 2:22, page 1102).
- 3. *Beware of the Sins of the Heart.*** The person who commits adultery in his heart is just as guilty as the person who actually carries it out (see Matthew 5:27–30, page 842).
- 4. *Avoid Adulterous Relationships.*** God specifically warns us against living in immoral relationships (see 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8, page 1088).

- 5. If You Fall, Ask God to Forgive You and Purify Your Heart and Desires.** Only God can forgive you, restore your joy, and fill you with the right desires (see Psalm 51:7-15, page 488).
- 6. Keep an Eternal Perspective.** Don't waste your time chasing after earthly pleasures (see 2 Peter 3:10-11, page 1140).
- 7. Live to Please God.** Surrendering your life to the leading of the Holy Spirit is the only way to live a life that is pleasing to God (see Romans 8:5-8, page 1010).

perseverance

There will be times in your Christian walk when you will feel emotionally "down." You may think that God has forgotten about you. Or you might become discouraged as you see others who have professed faith in Jesus Christ lose interest in spiritual things and fall away. You may begin to wonder whether you are next on the devil's "hit list." But God will not allow you to be hit with more than you can handle spiritually. In fact, it is during times of trouble that you will actually be strengthened, not weakened.

As you read your Bible, you will come across words like *endurance* and *perseverance*. These words are often used when the Bible compares the Christian life to a race. The race referred to is a marathon, not a fifty-yard dash. Because the Christian life is a long-distance run, you need to pace yourself, to persevere, and most of all, to *finish* the race. Look up the following passages that describe how and why you need to persevere through the inevitable struggles of life.

- 1. Perseverance Produces Results.** As you steadily grow in your understanding of God's Word and apply it to your life, you will win others to the Lord (see Luke 8:15, page 910).
- 2. Life's Trials Will Make You Stronger.** You shouldn't view difficulties as obstacles to your faith but as opportunities for spiritual growth (see James 1:2-4, page 1126).
- 3. Christ Endured Great Pain for Us.** Jesus modeled the ultimate in endurance so that we would be encouraged to keep our faith strong in the race of life (see Hebrews 12:1-3, page 1120).
- 4. God Honors Those Who Persevere.** A wholehearted commitment to God will enable you to "finish well" with your faith intact (see Joshua 14:6-14, page 198).

honesty and integrity

Honesty and integrity seem to be in short supply these days. Yet the Bible tells us that they are a part of the godly person's life. Unfortunately, the world tends to gloss over that aspect of the Christian life. It wants to characterize Christians as people who are out of touch with reality. But the Christian is simply someone who allows God to influence every aspect of his or her life—down to the practical, everyday dealings of business, finances, and relationships. The following passages examine how honesty and integrity should characterize our lives.

- 1. We Should Be above Criticism.** Daniel's faithful and honest lifestyle made him "stand apart" from everyone else (see Daniel 6:3-4, page 762).
- 2. Our Conduct Should Cause Others to Glorify Christ.** Living a good, honest life around our unbelieving neighbors will ultimately bring glory to God (see 1 Peter 2:9-12, page 1136).
- 3. We Need to Set an Example for Others.** We must seriously pursue a life of integrity in order to be a solid example for our fellow Christians (see Titus 2:6-8, page 1106).

faith and works

When a person truly comes to Jesus Christ, this relationship will dramatically transform his or her life. We may see this transformation more immediately in the lives of some than others. For those whose lives are characterized by pronounced bad habits and blatant immoral living, the change in lifestyle will show others that something profound has indeed happened within that person's life. For others who may not be known for blatantly sinful living, the change may not be as outwardly pronounced, but it is just as significant. Remember, all of us were separated from God by sin, which was dealt with and atoned for at the cross of Jesus.

Our conversion will show itself in both fruit and works. This concept of "bearing fruit" is used often in Scripture to describe the results of someone's commitment to Jesus Christ. If we do not bear fruit, then it is apparent we have not really come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Bearing fruit is not an option. It is the natural result of a person coming into union with God. Sometimes there is confusion in this area of fruit bearing, or works. See what the Bible has to say about the issue.

- 1. Our Lives Should Show That God Is at Work in Our Hearts.** God desires that we demonstrate our spiritual growth through our outward actions (see Romans 7:4, page 1008).

2. **We Must Live Out Our Faith.** Faith without deeds is incomplete (see James 2:14-18, page 1128).
3. **God Saved Us for a Purpose.** While God himself gave us salvation, he planned that our salvation would lead to good works (see Ephesians 2:10, page 1066).
4. **Our Walk Should Match Our Talk.** God isn't as concerned with what we *say* we believe as with how we *live* what we believe (see Matthew 7:21, page 846).

discernment

An inspector who worked for Scotland Yard in the counterfeit department was once asked if he spent a lot of time handling counterfeit money. He said, "No." He then explained that he spent so much time handling the "real thing" that he could immediately detect the counterfeit. In the same way, as we become knowledgeable about God's Word, we, too, will be able to detect teachings and concepts that are contrary to Scripture. Make no mistake—counterfeit "truth" is out there in force. Look at the following Scripture passages to find out how you can keep from falling prey to false teachings.

1. **Beware of Satan's Clever Imitations.** Satan's work and agents may appear godly, but in the end they will be exposed for what they really are (see Matthew 13:24-30, page 854).
2. **Recognize Satan's Strategies.** Lies and deceit are Satan's two main strategies to lead people away from the truth (see 1 Timothy 4:1-2, page 1096).
3. **Understand the Difference between the True Gospel and a False Gospel.** Scripture provides us with a "litmus test" to distinguish between truth and error (see 1 John 4:1-3, page 1144).
4. **Use God's Word to Evaluate Someone's Teachings.** The best way to detect a counterfeit is to become more familiar with the "real thing" (see Acts 17:11, page 990).

peace

Peace of mind—it seems elusive in a day when murders are common- place, job security is nonexistent, and the moral fabric of society is tearing apart at the seams. Yet Jesus has promised that each one of us can experience true peace:

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid" (John 14:27).

Unfortunately, some people are so caught up in the "pursuit of peace" that they have forgotten that Jesus has already given it to them. They have simply left that gift "unopened." And we cannot find peace outside of the parameters God has given us. As Augustine said many years ago, "Our souls are restless until they find their rest in God." Begin to "unwrap" this precious gift by examining what God's Word has to say about it.

1. Peace Begins When We Relinquish Control of Our Lives to God.

When we give Jesus our burdens and allow him to guide us, we find rest (see Matthew 11:28-30, page 850).

2. Perfect Peace Builds upon Total Trust. As God becomes a regular part of our daily lives, our worries begin to disappear (see Isaiah 26:3, page 606).

3. Our Peace Continues As We Follow the Holy Spirit. We must stop allowing our old, sinful nature to control us before we can really experience peace (see Romans 8:5-8, page 1016).

4. A Love for God's Word Brings Peace of Mind. The more the Bible becomes a part of our lives, the greater the peace we will experience (see Psalm 119:165-168, page 530).

5. God's Peace Needs to Rule in Our Hearts. We must constantly keep other things from crowding out God's peace in our lives (see Colossians 3:15, page 1082).

joy

One noticeable change that takes place in a new believer's life is the inner joy he or she receives. In fact, joy is listed as part of the "fruit of the Spirit" that should be evident in a believer's life (see Galatians 5:22, page 1062). But this joy is different from the fleeting and temporary "happiness" that is usually dependent upon "good things" happening in someone's life. While sorrows will come a believer's way, the Holy Spirit gives him or her an inner joy and peace that cannot be taken away. Below are some of the ways in which you can experience God's joy in your life.

1. Studying God's Word Helps Us to Experience His Joy. As we study God's Word and honor God with our lives, we experience his joy in our lives (see Nehemiah 8:1-18, page 422).

2. Knowing and Trusting God Is the Source of Inexpressible Joy. The greatest joy we can experience comes only from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 1:8, page 1134).

- 3. *Sharing Your Faith Results in Joy.*** While laboring to introduce people to Jesus is difficult work, the end result will give you much to celebrate (see Psalm 126:5-6, page 532).
- 4. *Overlooking Petty Issues Frees Us to Experience Joy.*** God wants us to experience his joy in our lives and to avoid those things that could hamper that joy (see 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, page 1026).
- 5. *Knowing Whom You Belong to and What the Future Holds Brings True Joy.*** Realizing that you are a child of God and that you will spend eternity in heaven with him will bring you joy (see Romans 15:13, page 1024).

accountability

Once you receive Jesus Christ into your life as your personal Lord and Savior, not only do you obtain the privileged gift of eternal life but you immediately acquire a great responsibility. You have been entrusted with the message of the gospel and are responsible for what you do with it in your life. In the end, we know that what we have done on this earth for Christ will be examined before almighty God and displayed before the rest of the world. The question we must all ask is this: Will what I am doing for Christ and his Kingdom stand the test of time? Those who have done much with what God has given them will be greatly rewarded. Take some time to see what God's Word has to say on this subject.

- 1. *The More We Know, the Greater Our Responsibility Will Be.*** The Lord holds those who have been given positions of spiritual leadership to a higher accountability for what they do (see Luke 12:48, page 920).
- 2. *We Are Responsible for Our Own Sins and Mistakes.*** We cannot pass blame onto others for our own failings (see Jeremiah 31:30, page 678).
- 3. *We Need to Invest Our Abilities and Resources in God's Kingdom.*** God has graciously given us abilities and resources to invest in the expansion of his Kingdom (see Luke 19:11-26, page 928).
- 4. *The Value of Our Work on Earth Will Be Tested.*** On Judgment Day, the quality of our faith and the work we have done for Jesus Christ will be revealed and rewarded accordingly (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, page 1028).



first steps

what to do after you
have accepted Christ

study the Bible

You might say that the Bible is the “user’s manual of life” we have all been searching for. Everything we need to know about God and living a life that pleases him is found in its pages.

Tragically, some of us go through life without so much as picking up this amazing book, whose words were inspired by God. Yet success or failure in the Christian life is determined by how much of the Bible we get into our hearts and minds and how obedient we are to the principles and teachings found within it. Just as we need to continually breathe oxygen to survive, we need to regularly study the Bible to grow and flourish spiritually. Here are some important reasons why we need to spend time in this life-changing book.

- 1. Studying the Bible Is Necessary for Our Spiritual Growth.** The Bible performs three functions to help us mature spiritually (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17, page 1103).
- 2. Studying the Bible Keeps Us Spiritually Strong.** The more we get into this book and apply its teachings, the more we will be able to stand our ground in the storms and trials of life (see Psalm 119:9-18, page 527).
- 3. Studying the Bible Makes Scripture a Central Part of Our Lives.** God desires that we make the Bible an integral part of our lives (see Deuteronomy 11:18-20, page 167).
- 4. Studying the Bible Helps Us Apply Its Truth to Our Lives.** We will notice positive changes in our lives as we apply what we read in Scripture (see Psalm 1:1-3, page 469).

pray

The idea of talking to God can be intimidating. But it doesn't have to be. In fact, prayer can be a wonderful experience if we know how to do it God's way. Fortunately, we have God's Word to teach us how to pray. The Bible instructs us to pray at all times, in any posture, in any place, for any reason. In addition, it does not matter whether you pray in King James English or the most contemporary jargon. God only desires that you pray from a pure and sincere heart.

The disciples observed the profound effect prayer had in Jesus' life and ministry. They witnessed how Jesus would often go off by himself to spend time in prayer with his heavenly Father. They saw the power, peace, and tranquility that emanated from his life, giving him the ability to stay calm in troubled circumstances. Jesus' prayer life so impressed these men that they asked him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1-13). Certainly if the perfect Son of God often took time to pray during his life here on earth, how much more do we, mere men and women, need to pray?

Because prayer is an essential ingredient to walking with Jesus Christ, we need to examine its elements found in God's Word.

- 1. Prayer Was Modeled for Us by Christ.** Jesus took the time to show his followers how to pray (see Matthew 6:5-15, page 843).
- 2. Prayer Is Not a Solitary Experience.** God has given us his Holy Spirit to aid us in prayer, even when we do not know what to pray (see Romans 8:26-27, page 1011).
- 3. Prayer Allows Us to Voice Our Requests to God.** Prayer is God's appointed way for us to relate our concerns and present our needs to him (see James 4:2-3, page 1127).
- 4. Prayer Enables Us to Seek Forgiveness.** When we pray sincerely for forgiveness, God will hear our prayers and restore us (see Hosea 14:1-7, page 781).
- 5. Prayer Helps Us Overcome Worry.** In the midst of troubles, we can receive God's peace through prayer (see Philippians 4:6-7, page 1077).
- 6. Prayer Increases Our Spiritual Knowledge and Maturity.** God will give us greater spiritual understanding through prayer (see Jeremiah 33:3, page 683).

look for and attend the right church

One of the essential building blocks of spiritual growth is fellowship with other believers by becoming part of a local church. The church (meaning the entire body of Christians) is not really an organization so much as an organism. It

thrives by keeping its members spiritually active and well-fed. The church provides you with spiritual instruction from God's Word, allows you to worship God with other believers, enables you to use your God-given gifts and abilities as God intended, and makes you accountable to spiritual leadership.

Some people think they can get enough spiritual input from Christian television, radio programs, and books. While those things do have value, nothing can replace the need to become an active member of a church. Think about it—if joining in fellowship with other believers was not important, why did Jesus establish the church? (See Matthew 16:18, page 858.) The Bible has plenty to say about the characteristics of a healthy, vibrant church and the necessity of Christian fellowship. There are four helpful insights from God's Word on looking for and attending the right church.

- 1. What to Look for in a Church.** You should look for a church that has the qualities and characteristics of the first-century church (see Acts 2:42, 44-47, page 969).
- 2. Why We Need Fellowship with Other Believers.** Fellowship with other Christians sharpens our spiritual discernment and prepares us for Christ's return (see Hebrews 10:25, page 1119).
- 3. Why the Church Needs You.** Not only will you benefit from the church, but the church will benefit from you and your God-given abilities (see Ephesians 4:11-16, page 1065).
- 4. You Have a Place in the Church.** God has given each one of us a unique role to play in our place of fellowship (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, page 1041).

obey God

The real evidence of a true Christian is a changed life. The great British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "Of what value is the grace I profess to receive if it does not dramatically change the way that I live? If it doesn't change the way that I live, it will never change my eternal destiny."

A changed life begins with obedience to God. This means that you will have to stop doing certain things and start doing others. While God begins to change your heart and desires once you have surrendered your life to him, he still gives you the freedom to decide just how much of your life you will let him control. But know this: Whatever you give up to follow Jesus Christ will pale in comparison to what he will give you in return. For example, when you give up sinful behaviors for God, he will replace your sin with forgiveness and a clear conscience. With this incentive for obedience, look at six specific ways the Bible instructs us to obey God.

- 1. Recognize That You Are a New Creation.** When you understand what God has done in your life, obedience becomes more of a desire than a mere duty (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, page 1051).
- 2. Follow God Wholeheartedly.** When you follow God completely, you will finish the race of life well (see Joshua 14:6-14, page 201).
- 3. Offer God More than Lip Service.** God looks at your heart more than your religious actions (see 1 Samuel 15:1-23, page 249).
- 4. Live in God's Love.** Discover the secret of true and lasting joy (see John 15:9-11, page 957).
- 5. Put On God's Armor.** Obedience prepares you for the battles of life (see Romans 13:11-14, page 1019).
- 6. Let God Occupy Your Thoughts.** Your thoughts will affect your actions (see Colossians 3:2-4, page 1081).

resist temptation

Now that you are a follower of Jesus Christ, Satan is going to try to draw you away by tempting you to disobey God's Word. It is not a sin to be tempted—even Jesus was tempted (see Luke 4:1-13, pages 902-903). We sin when we give in to that temptation. The good news is that God will never let a temptation become so strong that we can't handle it. In addition, he has given us specific ways to handle temptation. Here are four things to remember when dealing with temptation.

- 1. Realize Who Is Tempting You.** Satan is the mastermind behind all of your temptations (see Ephesians 6:10-12, page 1069).
- 2. Resist the Devil.** The Bible says that if you resist Satan's enticements, he will flee from you (see James 4:7-8, page 1129).
- 3. Rejoice Because Victory Is Yours in Christ Jesus.** God promises that he will always provide a way of escape (see 1 Corinthians 10:13, page 1037).
- 4. Remember That Others Have Successfully Dealt with Temptation.** Joseph's example shows us one of the best ways to resist temptation (see Genesis 39:1-23, page 37).

live in God's power

Some people look at the Christian life and say, "I couldn't begin to live that way and hold to those standards. It is too hard!" This is true. It is not hard to be a Christian—it is impossible (that is, without the help of the Holy Spirit). You see, God has given you power to live the Christian life. The moment you asked Jesus

Christ into your heart, he gave you the gift of his Holy Spirit (see “Who Is the Holy Spirit?” page A24).

The Holy Spirit not only takes up residence in your heart but he empowers you to live a holy life and to be an effective witness for Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit’s power is much like an investment. You need to draw upon his power daily to live out your faith. To find out more about how the Holy Spirit can empower and strengthen your Christian walk, look up the following passages of Scripture.

- 1. *God’s Spirit Will Guide You.*** The Holy Spirit will help you understand the truths of Scripture and the character of God (see John 16:13-15, page 959).
- 2. *God’s Spirit Will Empower Your Witness.*** The Holy Spirit will give you greater courage and an increased ability to share your faith (see Acts 1:8, page 967).
- 3. *God’s Spirit Will Encourage You to Be Obedient.*** You will have a Holy Spirit-inspired desire to obey God’s commands (see Ezekiel 36:26-27, page 745).
- 4. *God’s Spirit Will Help You Overcome Sin.*** Sin will no longer have the power over you it had before you accepted Christ into your life (see Romans 8:9-14, page 1009).

share your faith

Next to personally knowing Jesus and walking with him, one of the greatest blessings of the Christian life is to lead someone else to Jesus Christ. The good news is that God wants to use you—not just pastors, missionaries, and evangelists—as his instrument to speak to others.

Jesus gave us this very commission in Mark 16:15, where he says, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.” This wonderful charge is known as the “great commission.” But the way some Christians follow it, you would think it was the “great suggestion.” Sharing our faith, however, is something that Jesus wants—and commands—us to do! How do we do this? First Peter 3:15-16 tells us to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks us about the hope we have in Jesus. Here are four passages from God’s Word that will help you to share your faith.

- 1. *You Don’t Need Any Training to Share.*** A changed heart is all you need to begin sharing your faith with others (see John 9:1-41, page 949).
- 2. *Be Open to God’s Leading.*** Effectively sharing your faith begins with a willing heart (see Acts 8:4-8, 26-38, page 979).

- 3. Understand the Simplicity of the Gospel.** The message of the gospel is simple yet powerful (see 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, page 1027).
- 4. Share Your Own Story.** Never underestimate the strength of your personal testimony (see Acts 26:1-23, page 999).

seek God's will

Have you ever wondered about the future? Have you pondered the answers to such important, life-changing decisions as whom you should marry or what career path you should pursue? More than likely, most of us have asked these questions and wondered if God has a definite plan or opinion on the matter. With that in mind, here is some good news: God is vitally interested in your life, and he does want to lead you in your decisions.

Jesus called his followers friends (see John 15:15, page 955). As God's friend, you already have an "inside track" in discovering God's will for your life. It is called the Bible. There you will find God's general will for your life (such as putting God first in all you do and following God's guidelines for marriage), as well as some principles to follow when seeking his specific direction for your life. In the end, finding God's will comes down to living out what you read in the Bible and then living by faith. Here are five steps you can take as you seek God's will.

- 1. Unconditionally Surrender Your Life.** Certain conditions must be met if you want to know God's will for your life (see Romans 12:1-2, page 1013).
- 2. Realize That God Has a Plan for Your Life.** Your life has purpose and meaning, and God wants to reveal it to you (see Jeremiah 29:11, page 677).
- 3. Act upon What God Has Already Revealed in Scripture.** God has already given us some specific guidelines to follow in his Word (see 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, page 1087).
- 4. Trust God Completely.** There is nothing more reassuring than entrusting an unknown future to a known God (see Proverbs 3:5-8, page 543).
- 5. Listen for God's Voice.** Sometimes God speaks to us in a quiet voice (see 1 Kings 19:11-13, page 311).

live as a disciple

When you hear the word *disciple*, do you immediately think of the Twelve who followed Jesus during his ministry on earth? Many people do not realize that Jesus still has disciples in this day and age. While every disciple is a believer, not

every believer is necessarily a disciple. A disciple is someone who has made a wholehearted commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. In one sense, you might call discipleship “radical Christian living.” When you truly make a commitment to be Christ’s disciple, you will be living the Christian life as it was meant to be lived. Anything short of discipleship is settling for less than what God desires. Here are four passages from the Bible that explain what it means to truly be a disciple of Jesus.

1. ***A Disciple Takes Up His or Her Cross and Follows Christ.*** Being a disciple takes work and commitment (see Luke 9:23-25, page 913).
2. ***A Disciple Counts the Cost.*** Jesus’ disciples are willing to give up everything to follow him (see Luke 14:25-33, page 923).
3. ***A Disciple Abides in Christ.*** The source of a disciple’s strength comes from his or her closeness to Christ (see John 15:1-17, page 955).
4. ***A Disciple Walks as Jesus Walked.*** Disciples pattern their lives after Jesus, the ultimate example of how to live (see 1 John 2:3-6, page 1143).

give to God

Money is such an important topic in the Bible that it is the main subject of nearly *half* the parables Jesus told. In addition, one out of every seven verses in the New Testament deals with the topic. To give you an idea of how this compares with other topics, Scripture offers about five hundred verses on prayer and fewer than five hundred on faith, while there are more than *two thousand* verses on money!

You may be wondering what money has to do with your faith. Now that Jesus Christ has come into your life, he wants to be Lord (to be in command) of every aspect of it. That includes your finances. Martin Luther astutely observed, “There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, the mind, and the purse [or wallet].” When we experience this “conversion of the purse” and give freely of our finances to the Lord’s work (to our church, a missionary, or a ministry), we will make the best investment possible—an investment with eternal dividends. With that in mind, here are four questions to consider about wealth and giving.

1. ***Why Should You Give a Portion of Your Financial Resources to God?*** God wants to prove his faithfulness through your regular giving, or tithes (see Malachi 3:8-11, page 831).
2. ***How Much Should You Give?*** God encourages us to give sacrificially (see Mark 12:41-44, page 891).

3. **What Happens When You Give?** When you give with the right motives, you will experience joy and God's generous blessings (see 2 Corinthians 9:6-14, page 1055).
4. **How Should You View Material Wealth?** Accumulating wealth should never be a high priority because it is eternally worthless (see Matthew 6:19-34, page 845).
5. **Can You Enjoy Wealth?** God may bless you materially, but you are responsible for using your material blessings wisely (see 1 Timothy 6:17-19, page 1097).

have courage in trials

Many Christians have the mistaken idea that once they make a commitment to Jesus Christ, life will be smooth sailing from that day forward. This is certainly not the case. While it is true that walking with Christ will help us avoid many of the problems we used to face, we are still going to experience what the Bible calls "trials."

Trials may come in the form of a crisis, a sudden illness, the loss of a loved one, or some drastic change in your life. You may go through a difficult time when you don't feel God's presence, when church may not be as exciting as it once was for you, or your prayers seem to go no higher than the ceiling. This may cause you to wonder if you have angered God or if he has left you. But God does not allow us to experience trials because he wants to see us suffer. Rather, he allows these difficulties into our lives to help us grow spiritually—to learn to live by faith, not by feelings. Look up the following passages to see the role trials play in our lives. Notice also God's promise to be with us during these times of trouble.

1. **Trials Sharpen Our Faith.** Hardships develop our character and purify our faith (see 1 Peter 1:3-7, page 1133).
2. **Trials Help Us Comfort Others.** Experiencing suffering deepens our compassion for others who suffer (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, page 1047).
3. **Trials Are Survivable.** We must keep our eternal perspective through the tough times (see 2 Corinthians 4:7-18, page 1049).
4. **Trials Test Our Foundation.** When we ground our lives in Christ, we can weather any storm (see Luke 6:48-49, page 909).
5. **Jesus Is with Us in Life's Storms.** We are never outside of God's watchful eye and his abiding presence (see Mark 4:35-41, page 879).
6. **God Gives Hope to Our Troubled Hearts.** We can have peace of mind in the middle of our greatest trials (see John 14:1-4, page 953).



off and running

how your faith affects the daily aspects of your life

marriage

How many times have you heard the cliché, “They have a marriage made in heaven”? This statement implies that some marriages are destined to be good, while others are destined to be bad. Such thinking assumes that marriage has a life of its own, and the only way to find out if you are to have a “good” one or a “bad” one is to “give it a shot.” What most people don’t seem to understand, though, is that marriage is like a mirror. It reflects what it sees. If a marriage is strong, it is because the husband and wife have put a lot of hard work into it. If a marriage is weak, it is because the husband or wife or both have neglected it.

God never intended for anyone to have a weak marriage. His design for marriage is lifelong, fulfilling companionship. For a couple’s marriage to thrive within his design, the couple must obey God and his Word and lay aside this world’s distorted and perverse concept of marriage. The Bible contains truths that will not only help keep a couple together but will also keep their marriage strong. In fact, the lessons the Bible gives on marriage should serve as the foundation of every Christian couple’s relationship. Whether you are married or single, the following verses will give you a godly perspective on marriage relationships.

- 1. God Created Marriage.** We can learn more about God’s marriage ideal from the world’s first husband and wife (see Genesis 2:15-25, page 4).
- 2. Husbands and Wives Have Distinct Roles in Marriage.** A marriage works when a couple follows God’s specific design for the husband and the wife (see Ephesians 5:21-33, page 1068).
- 3. The Boundaries of Marriage Are to Be Honored and Enjoyed.** Sexual intimacy is meant to be enjoyed only within the bounds of the marriage relationship (see Proverbs 5:15-20, page 546).

4. **Keeping Your Marriage Strong.** God promises punishment to those who commit adultery or lead immoral lives (see Hebrews 13:4, page 1122).
5. **Divorce Is Not Part of God's Plan.** Jesus teaches that marriage is meant to be a lifelong commitment (see Mark 10:2-12, page 886).
6. **A Christian Should Not Leave a Non-Christian Spouse.** An unbelieving husband or wife should not be abandoned, but loved (see 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, page 1034).
7. **Marriage Is Not for Everyone.** Although God blesses many with marriage, some are given a calling or ability to remain single (see 1 Corinthians 7:1-40, page 1032).
8. **Marriage Is for Companionship.** While God has given some the ability to remain happily single, he has given others the gift of a companion for life (see Proverbs 18:22, page 556).
9. **There Is an Intimacy in Marriage That Can Be Found Nowhere Else.** God wants you to have a fulfilling, enjoyable sex life within the parameters of marriage (see Song of Songs 4:1-5:1, page 580).
10. **A Strong Marriage Is an Ideal Environment for Raising Godly Children.** Those children who see their parents united by their love for God and one another have a distinct advantage over those who do not (see Malachi 2:15, page 830).

children

God's plan is to build, strengthen, and protect the family. Satan's plan is to undermine, weaken, and destroy it. Make no mistake: Satan has declared war on the family. Tragically, many of us have been willing accomplices. Why? Because the bulk of the problems in our culture today can be directly traced to the breakdown of the family or to homes in which biblical principles are ignored or disobeyed. This not only includes husbands and wives splitting apart but also "alternative families," such as homosexual marriages and "live-in" lovers. Such relationships will never be blessed or honored by God, for they are clearly outside the parameters of his will. It has been said, "A family can survive without a country, but a country cannot survive without the family."

Fortunately, there is hope. The Bible gives us specific guidelines to follow when it comes to parenting. If they are put into practice, we will see amazing results. See what the Bible has to say about raising children who love and revere the Lord in a world that is often hostile to God and his values.

- 1. Children Are Never Too Young to Learn about God.** Teaching your children to love the Lord in their early years will help them stay true to the Lord later in life (see Proverbs 22:6, page 560).
- 2. Make Sure Your Children Hear the Gospel Message.** The gospel must first be preached in the home (see Acts 16:29-34, page 988).
- 3. Encourage Your Children's Spiritual Growth.** As the apostle Paul suggests, a loving father encourages his children to live a life pleasing to God (see 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, page 1086).
- 4. Watch the Legacy You Leave.** Your devotion to God—or lack of it—will make a resounding impression on the next generation (see 2 Chronicles 17:3-6, page 386).
- 5. Discipline Your Children.** Parents who love their children and want them to grow up into young men and women of character will discipline them (see Proverbs 29:15, page 566).
- 6. Avoid Aggravating Your Children.** Your discipline must be tempered with love so that your children do not become resentful (see Colossians 3:20-21, page 1082).

priorities

As a Christian, one of the most dramatic changes in your life will be the way you spend your time. Your pursuits and ambitions in life will be different. After all, you are no longer living for yourself but for God. It may be a difficult transition at first, but here are a few pointers we can glean from God's Word.

- 1. Place Christ before All Else.** To be a true follower of Jesus Christ, you need to be wholly devoted to him and let nothing else get in the way of your devotion (see Philippians 3:4-11, page 1076).
- 2. Balance Christian Service with Worship.** Don't get so caught up in "serving" the Lord that you forget to worship him and get to know him better (see Luke 10:32-42, page 916).
- 3. Don't Waste Time Pursuing Things That Won't Last.** Your time on earth is short. Ask God to help you spend it on things that count (see Psalm 39:1-7, page 482).
- 4. Spend Time Feeding Your Soul.** God offers blessings to you if you choose to spend time with him rather than to devote your life to the pursuit of temporary satisfaction (see Isaiah 55:1-13, page 634).
- 5. Keep Your Spiritual Zeal Alive.** Work hard to keep that "fire" in your heart burning brightly as you serve the Lord (see Romans 12:11, page 1014).

prayer time

Before you became a Christian, you may have prayed before meals, on holidays, or perhaps during times of crisis. As a believer, however, prayer should become second nature. Prayer is no longer an option but should become part of all you do.

As you integrate prayer into every aspect of your life, you will not always see your prayers answered the way you would like them to be. When this happens, it is easy to grow discouraged and give up praying. But Jesus implored us to pray and never give up (Luke 18:1). Paul also instructed believers to “never stop praying” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). When we fail to pray, we miss out on one of the greatest blessings of the Christian life—fellowship with God himself, our power source for living. In addition, we are going against what God has instructed us to do.

The Bible gives us some perspective on how to experience the power of prayer in our lives. The following is a partial list of what should characterize your prayers as a believer.

- 1. *Pray Regularly.*** God wants to hear our prayers throughout the day—not just in times of crisis or before meals (see Psalm 55:16-17, page 490).
- 2. *Pray without Hindrance.*** Sins and other distractions can negatively affect your prayer life (see Isaiah 59:1-2, page 638).
- 3. *Pray Expecting to Get Answers.*** The Bible gives us guidelines to follow so that our prayers will be answered (see 1 John 5:14-15, page 1146).
- 4. *Pray Effectively.*** Prayer can work powerfully in the face of a crisis when God’s people come together and call out to him (see Acts 12:1-17, page 982).
- 5. *Pray Persistently.*** God honors persistent prayer (see Luke 18:1-8, page 926).

conversation

As a Christian, it is extremely important to remember that you are a representative of Jesus Christ. One of the more visible ways you represent him is through your speech or conversations. It has been said that every person speaks about thirty thousand words in an average day. That is a considerable amount of “representation time”—especially when you consider the power of the spoken word. With our mouths we have the power to build up or destroy. This should give you even greater motivation to weigh your words before you speak them.

The Bible shares some practical advice when it comes to controlling the tongue. Below are a few passages of Scripture to guide you in this area.

- 1. Think before You Speak.** You demonstrate great wisdom and care when you weigh your words (see Proverbs 16:23-24, page 554).
- 2. Control Your Tongue.** As you learn to control your tongue, you will be able to control other aspects of your life (see James 3:1-12, page 1128).
- 3. Refrain from Idle Talk.** We will be held accountable for every idle word we speak (see Matthew 12:35-37, page 852).
- 4. Make a Habit of Talking about the Lord.** When we talk about the Lord and his blessings with one another, God is pleased (see Malachi 3:16, page 832).
- 5. Keep Your Conversation Gracious.** We should speak gently and sensibly as we share our faith with others (see Colossians 4:6, page 1084).
- 6. Never Use Vulgar Speech.** Our conversations need to reflect God's goodness, not the world's coarseness (see 1 Peter 3:10, page 1134).
- 7. Think of Ways to Encourage, Praise, and Build Up Others.** As a Christian, you should use your speech constructively (see 1 Thessalonians 5:11, page 1090).

relationships

The people we associate with on a regular basis can either help or hinder our spiritual growth. For that reason God has given us some invaluable advice and strong warnings when it comes to choosing our friends. Look at the following Scripture passages to see what to pursue and what to avoid in your relationships with others.

- 1. Find a Close Christian Friend.** A true Christian friend will help you get through times of trouble and temptation (see Galatians 6:1-3, page 1060).
- 2. Don't Associate with Those Who Mock God.** God and his Word should be the focus of praise—not mockery—in your friendships (see Psalm 1:1-6, page 466).
- 3. Avoid Relationships That Could Cause You to Sin.** Bad company corrupts good character (see 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, page 1052).
- 4. Make Sure Your Friendships Honor God.** Seek the friendship of those who live as Christ intended (see 1 John 1:7, page 1142).

responsibility


A common question that many new Christians have is, "Can I be a Christian and still do . . . ?" Some questions of "Christian liberty" can be answered easily because the Bible directly addresses these questions. For instance, if someone

asks, “Is it OK, as a Christian, to get drunk?” The answer is clearly no. The Bible says, “Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). However, questions like, “Can I be a Christian and still drink alcoholic beverages?” or “Can I listen to any kind of music?” or “Can I go to any movie?” are not answered so easily. They are among the many “gray” areas of the Christian life that do not necessarily have a “chapter and verse” answer.

When you face a situation that the Bible does not directly address, you must consider whether or not your actions will please God. Here is a “litmus test” you can apply to those uncertain areas of life.

- 1. Does This Activity Build Me Up Spiritually?** You need to avoid anything that has the potential to dull your spiritual senses and take away your hunger for God and his Word (see 1 Corinthians 10:23, page 1038).
- 2. Does This Activity Bring Me under Its Power?** As a Christian, you only want to be controlled by the power of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 6:12, page 1030).
- 3. Do I Have an Uneasy Conscience about This Activity?** You must be obedient to what God has told you to do, not swayed by what others are doing (see Romans 14:23, page 1022).
- 4. Could This Activity Cause Other Christians to Stumble in Their Faith?** Stay away from things that could negatively influence other Christians around you (see Romans 14:15, page 1020).

job performance



Some of the greatest challenges you may ever face as a Christian will come from the workplace. Perhaps you work in an unethical, morally questionable environment. Maybe you find it difficult to respect your supervisors. You might find your job tedious or meaningless. You might even wonder if you are making an impact on your coworkers for Christ. Whatever your vocation, your work can become more fulfilling and rewarding when you follow what the Bible has to say about your attitude toward your job or responsibilities. Take these biblical pointers to heart and see what a difference they will make!

- 1. Work As If You Are Working for the Lord.** Keep in mind that you are ultimately serving the Lord, not just people (see Colossians 3:22-24, page 1084).
- 2. Create a Spiritual Hunger in Those around You.** Your godly example can help increase your coworkers’ desire to know more about Jesus (see Titus 2:9-10, page 1106).

- 3. *Strive to Be Responsible.*** People will respect you and your message when you can prove that you are responsible (see 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, page 1088).
- 4. *Honor Christ with Your Hard Work.*** Don't allow nonbelievers to criticize the Lord because of your poor witness (see Daniel 6:1-28, page 764).
- 5. *Don't Neglect Your Spiritual Health.*** Never place your desire for material wealth above your spiritual welfare (see Luke 12:16-21, page 918).

attitude toward self

Many are on a quest today to find personal happiness. They will do whatever is necessary to “find themselves.” They are told that the answer is “within,” so they search in all the wrong places trying to find meaning and purpose in life. The Bible, however, does not teach that the answer is within us. Rather, it teaches that the *problem* is within us. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?” For that reason, all attempts to reform or improve ourselves will meet with failure. We do not need self-esteem as much as we need a realistic view of who we are and who God is. Once we honestly assess our own sinful condition and come to grips with our built-in weakness and vulnerability to sin, then we will be able to appreciate God's solution. In a nutshell, the way to true happiness comes not from seeking *it* but from seeking *God*. Here's what God's Word has to say about how we can be happy, fulfilled people.

- 1. *We Need to Recognize Our True Condition.*** As we humble ourselves before God, we will be blessed (see Matthew 5:3-5, page 840).
- 2. *Our Needs Must Come Last.*** Jesus gave us the ultimate example of what it means to be a servant (see Hebrews 13:11-13, page 1124).
- 3. *We Will Find Happiness in Loving God and Serving Others.*** Loving God and others gives us real purpose and meaning in life (see Matthew 22:37-39, page 868).
- 4. *We Must Surrender Our Dreams and Seek God's Will.*** True followers of Christ entrust their future into God's hands because he knows what is best for us (see Matthew 16:24-26, page 858).

What Is Right and Wrong? . . .	69
What Is Revival? . . .	379
Is the Bible Believable? . . .	899
What Is Backsliding? . . .	933
Why Is Jesus Christ the Only Way to God? . . .	971
Aren't Other Religions Just as Good as Christianity? . . .	973
What Happens to Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel? . . .	1005
If God Is So Good, Why Do Bad Things Happen to His People? . . .	1007
How Should I View Authority? . . .	1017
Does God Approve of Alternative Lifestyles? . . .	1029
What Are Spiritual Gifts? . . .	1067
Why Would a Good God Send Anyone to Hell? . . .	1113
How Can I Tell the Difference between True and False Teachings about God? . . .	1145

The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in public worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

The Publishers
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Translation Philosophy and Methodology. English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept

the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader's understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team. To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of Evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide Evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has

been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, and an additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007. This printing of the New Living Translation reflects the updated 2007 text.

Written to Be Read Aloud. It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation. The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues. The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow

subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, “ephah” [a unit of dry volume] or “cubit” [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today’s readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.
- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, “ten shekels of silver” becomes “ten pieces of silver” to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the “denarius” as “the normal daily wage” to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: “Greek *a denarius*, the payment for a full day’s wage.” In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: “the third day of the month Adar.” This was during the sixth year of King Darius’s reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him

Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’ ” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’ ”

- Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.
- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this, we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.
- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.
- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish

people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the religious leaders,” where appropriate.

- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology. For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In

place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names. Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it “Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names. All appearances of *’el*, *’elohim*, or *’eloah* have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name *’adonai*, which we render “Lord.” When *’adonai* and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” This also distinguishes *’adonai* YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with *’elohim*, which is rendered “LORD God.” When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When YHWH appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *christos* has been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed, *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes. The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “Hebrew,” “Aramaic,” or “Greek,” identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Greek *the breaking of bread.*”
- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”
- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Psalms 8:2; 53:3; Proverbs 3:12;).
- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote

or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis 3:20 reads: “*Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’ ” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God’s Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God’s guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God’s Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

The Bible Translation Committee
October 2007

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OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

AUTHOR: MOSES | DATE WRITTEN: 1450–1410 B.C. | GENRE: NARRATIVE

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. The word *genesis* means “the origin or coming into being of something.” Recorded here are such important beginnings as the Creation, the fall of man, and the early years of the nation of Israel.

CHAPTER 1

The Account of Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.”

⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space “sky.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened.

¹⁰God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds

produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild

1:1 Or *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . Or When God began to create the heavens and the earth, . . .*

animals.” And that is what happened.

²⁵God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make human beings* in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷So God created human beings* in his own image.

In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.

³⁰And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The Man and Woman in Eden

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs* came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. ¹⁶But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the

CHAPTER 2

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested* from all his work.

1:26 Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. 1:27 Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. 2:2 Or *ceased*; also in 2:3. 2:6 Or *mist*.



off and running
GOD CREATED MARRIAGE
 Read GENESIS 2:15-25

When Jesus was asked about the issue of divorce, he replied, “[Divorce] was not what God had originally intended” (Matthew 19:8). In other words,

“From the beginning it was not so.” So what is God’s original design for marriage? God created Eve because he knew that it wasn’t “good for [Adam] to be alone” (verse 18). The way God uniquely created Eve from one of Adam’s ribs illustrates God’s design for marriage: that the husband and wife become one. Achieving oneness in marriage requires couples to do two things:

1. Leave. As verse 24 states, marriage begins when a “man leaves his father and mother.” By specifying the parent-child relationship, it is implied that if it is necessary to leave your father and mother, then all lesser ties must be broken,

fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man* to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man’s ribs* and closed up the opening. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called ‘woman,’
because she was taken from ‘man.’”

²⁴This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

CHAPTER 3

The Man and Woman Sin

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

²“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees

2:19 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. 2:21 Or *took a part of the man’s side*. 3:8 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter.

in the garden,” the woman replied. ³“It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

⁴“You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵“God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man* and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

¹¹“Who told you that you were naked?” the LORD God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

¹²The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”

¹³Then the LORD God asked the woman, “What have you done?”

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

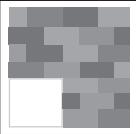
¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild.

changed, or left behind. You will still love and honor your parents. You will still have other friends. But your best friend should be your spouse. And no one or thing—including hobbies, business, or even church activities—should get in the way of that relationship.

2. Cleave. To cleave means “to adhere firmly and closely or loyally and unwaveringly.” As the text says, “the two are united into one” when this happens. In the original Hebrew, the word used for cleaving meant an aggressive action, implying that you are holding tightly to your relationship with your spouse. The Greek translation of this same word means “to cement together, to stick like glue, or to be welded together so the two cannot be separated without serious damage to both.” For that reason, you must periodically take stock of your life and ask yourself whether your current relationships or pursuits are drawing you and your spouse together or driving you apart.

For the next note on “Marriage,” turn to p. 1068.



cornerstones
HOW DOES SATAN ATTACK PEOPLE?
 Read GENESIS 3:1-7

This passage records Satan’s first tempting of humans, and it provides us with a wealth of information concerning his tactics.

Here are the four strategies Satan used effectively in his attack in the garden:

1. He Questioned God’s Word. Satan did not deny that God had spoken. He simply questioned whether Eve understood what God meant. He wanted her to think that perhaps she had misunderstood God’s command. Today Satan still twists the truth to try to alienate people from God.

2. He Questioned God’s Love. Satan wanted to make Eve think that God was holding something back. In reality, God had placed those restrictions in Adam and Eve’s life to keep them from sinning and destroying themselves. Likewise, the barriers God places in our lives are there because he loves us.

3. He Denied God’s Word. First Satan questioned God’s word, but then he denied God’s word. He went from “Did God really say this?” to “That’s a lie!” It is a short step from questioning God’s word to denying it. If Eve had not listened to Satan’s questioning, she may never have fallen into his trap.

4. He Substituted His Own Lie. Satan led Eve to believe that if she ate the fruit she would become like God. At that point Eve had a choice: She could take God at his word or believe Satan’s lie.

The Bible calls Satan “the father of lies” and even acknowledges that in the last days Satan will resort to deceiving people through a grand, counterfeit scheme (see 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, pp. 1091-1092). The best defense against Satan’s attack is to fill your mind with the truth found in God’s Word.

Satan knows that our minds are the core of our thoughts—where we reason, fantasize, and imagine. He will attempt to make you second-guess what God has said in his Word and get you to dwell on the what-ifs in life. Our counterattack is found in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: “We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.”

For the next note on “Who Is the Devil?” turn to p. 1164.

You will crawl on your belly,
 groveling in the dust as long
 as you live.

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you
 and the woman,
 and between your offspring and her
 offspring.

He will strike* your head,
 and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶ Then he said to the woman,
 “I will sharpen the pain of your
 pregnancy,
 and in pain you will give birth.
 And you will desire to control your
 husband,
 but he will rule over you.*”

¹⁷ And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate
 from the tree
 whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,
 the ground is cursed because of you.
 All your life you will struggle to scratch
 a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
 though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow
 will you have food to eat
 until you return to the ground
 from which you were made.
 For you were made from dust,
 and to dust you will return.”

Paradise Lost: God’s Judgment

²⁰ Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve,
 because she would be the mother of all who

3:15 Or *bruise*; also in 3:15b. 3:16 Or *And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you.*

live.* ²¹And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²²Then the LORD God said, "Look, the human beings* have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!" ²³So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

CHAPTER 4

Cain and Abel

Now Adam* had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the LORD's help, I have produced* a man!" ²Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. ³When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought a gift—the best of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, ⁵but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

⁶"Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? ⁷You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

⁸One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields."* And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

⁹Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?"

"I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

¹⁰But the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! ¹¹Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. ¹²No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth."

¹³Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment* is too great for me to bear! ¹⁴You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you

have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!"

¹⁵The LORD replied, "No, for I will give a seven-fold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. ¹⁶So Cain left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod,* east of Eden.

The Descendants of Cain

¹⁷Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. ¹⁸Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of* Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. ²¹His brother's name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. ²²Lamech's other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah. ²³One day Lamech said to his wives,

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.
I have killed a man who attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.

²⁴ If someone who kills Cain is punished seven times,
then the one who kills me will be
punished seventy-seven times!"

The Birth of Seth

²⁵Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth,* for she said, "God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed." ²⁶When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

CHAPTER 5

The Descendants of Adam

This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings,* he made them to be like himself. ²He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them "human."

³When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him—

3:20 *Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "to give life." 3:22 *Or the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. 4:1a *Or the man*; also in 4:25. 4:1b *Or I have acquired*. *Cain* sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean "produce" or "acquire." 4:8 *As* in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks "*Let's go out into the fields.*" 4:13 *Or My sin*. 4:16 *Nod* means "wandering." 4:18 *Or the ancestor of*, and so throughout the verse. 4:25 *Seth* probably means "granted"; the name may also mean "appointed." 5:1 *Or man*; Hebrew reads *adam*; similarly in 5:2.

in his very image. He named his son Seth.

⁴After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of* Enosh. ⁷After the birth of* Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁸Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

¹¹Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.

¹²When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

²¹When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. ²²After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

²³Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

²⁵When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son. ²⁹Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, "May he bring us relief* from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed." ³⁰After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and

daughters. ³¹Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

³²By the time Noah was 500 years old, he was the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

CHAPTER 6

A World Gone Wrong

Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. ²The sons of God saw the beautiful women* and took any they wanted as their wives. ³Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not put up with* humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years."

⁴In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

⁵The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ⁷And the LORD said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them." ⁸But Noah found favor with the LORD.

The Story of Noah

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. ¹⁰Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. ¹²God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. ¹³So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

¹⁴"Build a large boat* from cypress wood* and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. ¹⁵Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.* ¹⁶Leave an 18-inch opening*

5:6 Or the ancestor of; also in 5:9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. 5:7 Or the birth of this ancestor of; also in 5:10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26.

5:29 Noah sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean "relief" or "comfort." 6:2 Hebrew daughters of men; also in 6:4.

6:3 Greek version reads will not remain in. 6:14a Traditionally rendered an ark. 6:14b Or gopher wood. 6:15 Hebrew 300 cubits [138 meters] long, 50 cubits [23 meters] wide, and 30 cubits [13.8 meters] high. 6:16 Hebrew an opening of 1 cubit [46 centimeters].

below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. ¹⁸But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. ²⁰Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

²²So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

CHAPTER 7

The Flood Covers the Earth

When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. ²Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice,* and take one pair of each of the others. ³Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. ⁴Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

⁵So Noah did everything as the LORD commanded him.

⁶Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ⁷He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. ⁸With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. ⁹They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

¹¹When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. ¹²The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

¹³That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. ¹⁴With them in the boat

were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. ¹⁵Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

¹⁷For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. ¹⁸As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. ¹⁹Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, ²⁰rising more than twenty-two feet* above the highest peaks. ²¹All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. ²²Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. ²³God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. ²⁴And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

CHAPTER 8

The Flood Recedes

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. ²The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. ³So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, ⁴exactly five months from the time the flood began,* the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵Two and a half months later,* as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

⁶After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat ⁷and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. ⁸He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. ⁹But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. ¹⁰After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. ¹¹This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. ¹²He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

¹³Noah was now 601 years old. On the first

7:2 Hebrew of each clean animal; similarly in 7:8. 7:20 Hebrew 15 cubits (6.9 meters). 8:4 Hebrew on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11. 8:5 Hebrew On the first day of the tenth month; see 7:11 and note on 8:4.

day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began,* the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. ¹⁴Two more months went by,* and at last the earth was dry!

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶“Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth.”

¹⁸So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. ¹⁹And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose.* ²¹And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. ²²As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

CHAPTER 9

God Confirms His Covenant

Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. ²All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. ³I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. ⁴But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

⁵“And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. ⁶If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings* in his own image. ⁷Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

⁸Then God told Noah and his sons, ⁹“I thereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, ¹⁰and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. ¹¹Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all

living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

¹²Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. ¹³I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. ¹⁴When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. ¹⁶When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” ¹⁷Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

Noah’s Sons

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

²⁰After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. ²³Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

²⁴When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. ²⁵Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

“May Canaan be cursed!

May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives.”

²⁶Then Noah said,

“May the LORD, the God of Shem, be blessed, and may Canaan be his servant!

²⁷ May God expand the territory of Japheth! May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem,* and may Canaan be his servant.”

²⁸Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. ²⁹He lived 950 years, and then he died.

CHAPTER 10

This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

8:13 Hebrew *On the first day of the first month*; see 7:11. 8:14 Hebrew *The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived*; see note on 8:13. 8:20 Hebrew *every clean animal and every clean bird*. 9:6 Or *man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. 9:27 Hebrew *May he live in the tents of Shem*.

Descendants of Japheth

- ²The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.
- ³The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.
- ⁴The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.* ⁵Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

Descendants of Ham

- ⁶The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.
- ⁷The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.
- ⁸Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth. ⁹Since he was the greatest hunter in the world,* his name became proverbial. People would say, "This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world." ¹⁰He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia,* with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh.
- ¹¹From there he expanded his territory to Assyria,* building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, ¹²and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).
- ¹³Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.*
- ¹⁵Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites,* ¹⁶Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. The Canaanite clans eventually spread out, ¹⁹and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.
- ²⁰These were the descendants of Ham, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Descendants of Shem

- ²¹Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth.* Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.
- ²²The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.
- ²³The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.
- ²⁴Arphaxad was the father of Shelah,* and Shelah was the father of Eber.
- ²⁵Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means "division"), for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. His brother's name was Joktan.
- ²⁶Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan. ³⁰The territory they occupied extended from Mesha all the way to Sephar in the eastern mountains.
- ³¹These were the descendants of Shem, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Conclusion

- ³²These are the clans that descended from Noah's sons, arranged by nation according to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.

CHAPTER 11

The Tower of Babel

At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. ²As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia* and settled there.

³They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) ⁴Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world."

⁵But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶"Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! ⁷Come, let's go down and confuse the

10:4 As in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version (see also 1 Chr 1:7); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Dodanim*.

10:9 Hebrew a great hunter before the LORD; also in 10:9b. 10:10 Hebrew *Shinar*. 10:11 Or *From that land Assyria went out*. 10:14 Hebrew *Casuhites*, from whom the Philistines came, and *Caphtorites*. Compare Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7.

10:15 Hebrew ancestor of *Heth*. 10:21 Or *Shem, whose older brother was Japheth*. 10:24 Greek version reads *Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah*. Compare Luke 3:36. 11:2 Hebrew *Shinar*.

people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

⁸In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why the city was called Babel,* because that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

The Line of Descent from Shem to Abram

¹⁰This is the account of Shem's family.

Two years after the great flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of* Arphaxad. ¹¹After the birth of* Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹²When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. ¹³After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.*

¹⁴When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. ²¹After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²²When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. ²³After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The Family of Terah

²⁷This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. ²⁸But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth,

while his father, Terah, was still living. ²⁹Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.) ³⁰But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

³¹One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. ³²Terah lived for 205 years* and died while still in Haran.

CHAPTER 12

The Call of Abram

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you.

²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants.*" And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. ⁹Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

¹⁰At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said

11:9 Or *Babylon*. *Babel* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "confusion." **11:10** Or *the ancestor of*; also in 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. **11:11** Or *the birth of this ancestor of*; also in 11:13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25. **11:12-13** Greek version reads **12**When Arphaxad was 135 years old, he became the father of Cainan. **13**After the birth of Cainan, Arphaxad lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan was 130 years old, he became the father of Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. Compare Luke 3:35-36. **11:32** Some ancient versions read *145 years*; compare 11:26 and 12:4. **12:7** Hebrew *seed*.

to his wife, Sarai, “Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife. Let’s kill him; then we can have her!’ ¹³So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you.”

¹⁴And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai’s beauty. ¹⁵When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. ¹⁶Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. ¹⁸So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. “What have you done to me?” he demanded. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!” ²⁰Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

CHAPTER 13

Abram and Lot Separate

So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. ²(Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.) ³From the Negev, they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. ⁴This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the LORD again.

⁵Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. ⁶But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. ⁷So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

⁸Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives! ⁹The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I’ll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I’ll go to the left.”

¹⁰Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The

whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. ¹²So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. ¹³But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the LORD.

¹⁴After Lot had gone, the LORD said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. ¹⁵I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants* as a permanent possession. ¹⁶And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! ¹⁷Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you.”

¹⁸So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. There he built another altar to the LORD.

CHAPTER 14

Abram Rescues Lot

About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia,* King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim ²fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).

³This second group of kings joined forces in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea*). ⁴For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

⁵One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emities at Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to Enmishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea.* ⁹They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah

13:15 Hebrew *seed*; also in 13:16. 14:1 Hebrew *Shinar*; also in 14:9. 14:3 Hebrew *Salt Sea*. 14:8 Hebrew *Siddim Valley* (see 14:3); also in 14:10.

fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. ¹¹The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies. ¹²They also captured Lot—Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.

¹³But one of Lot's men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.

¹⁴When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them at Dan. ¹⁵There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

¹⁷After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High,* brought Abram some bread and wine. ¹⁹Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰And blessed be God Most High,
who has defeated your enemies
for you.”

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”

²²Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I solemnly swear to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’

²⁴I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”

CHAPTER 15

The LORD's Covenant Promise to Abram

Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”

²But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. ³You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”

⁴Then the LORD said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” ⁵Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!”

⁶And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

⁷Then the LORD told him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.”

⁸But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?”

⁹The LORD told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half.

¹¹Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

¹²As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth.

¹⁵(As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.”

¹⁷After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses.

¹⁸So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt* to the great Euphrates River—¹⁹the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,

14:18 Hebrew *El-Elyon*; also in 14:19, 20, 22. 15:18 Hebrew *the river of Egypt*, referring either to an eastern branch of the Nile River or to the Brook of Egypt in the Sinai (see Num 34:5).

²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites, and Jebusites.”

CHAPTER 16

The Birth of Ishmael

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. ²So Sarai said to Abram, “The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal. ³So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

⁴So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, “This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she's pregnant she treats me with contempt. The LORD will show who's wrong—you or me!”

⁶Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

⁷The angel of the LORD found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. ⁸The angel said to her, “Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai,” she replied.

⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.”

¹⁰Then he added, “I will give you more descendants than you can count.”

¹¹And the angel also said, “You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means ‘God hears’), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress. ¹²This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives.”

¹³Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, “You are the God who sees me.”* She also said, “Have I truly seen the One who sees me?” ¹⁴So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means “well of the Living One who sees me”). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

16:13 Hebrew *El-roi*. 17:5 Abram means “exalted father”; Abraham sounds like a Hebrew term that means “father of many.” 17:7 Hebrew *seed*; also in 17:7b, 8, 9, 10, 19. 17:15 Sarai and Sarah both mean “princess”; the change in spelling may reflect the difference in dialect between Ur and Canaan.

CHAPTER 17

Abram Is Named Abraham

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. ²I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

³At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴“This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! ⁵What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham,* for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

⁷“I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants* after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”

The Mark of the Covenant

⁹Then God said to Abraham, “Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. ¹⁰This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. ¹¹You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. ¹³All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.”

Sarai Is Named Sarah

¹⁵Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah.* ¹⁶And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

¹⁷Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he

thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?”¹⁸ So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”

¹⁹But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac,* and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant.²⁰ As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.²¹ But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.”²² When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

²³On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him.²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised,²⁵ and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen.²⁶ Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day,²⁷ along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

CHAPTER 18

A Son Is Promised to Sarah

The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day.² He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

³“My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while.⁴ Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet.⁵ And since you’ve honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.”

“All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.”

⁶So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures* of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.”⁷ Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it.⁸ When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

⁹“Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked.

“She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

¹⁰Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent.¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children.¹² So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?”

¹³Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.”

But the LORD said, “No, you did laugh.”

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

¹⁶Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

¹⁷“Should I hide my plan from Abraham?” the LORD asked.¹⁸ “For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him.¹⁹ I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised.”

²⁰So the LORD told Abraham, “I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant.²¹ I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know.”

²²The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham.

²³Abraham approached him and said, “Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked?²⁴ Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes?”

²⁵Surely you wouldn’t do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn’t do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?”

²⁶And the LORD replied, “If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake.”

²⁷Then Abraham spoke again. “Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes.²⁸ Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?”

And the LORD said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there."

²⁹Then Abraham pressed his request further. "Suppose there are only forty?"

And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty."

³⁰"Please don't be angry, my Lord," Abraham pleaded. "Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?"

And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it if I find thirty."

³¹Then Abraham said, "Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?"

And the LORD replied, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."

³²Finally, Abraham said, "Lord, please don't be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?"

And the LORD replied, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten."

³³When the LORD had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.

CHAPTER 19

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

That evening the two angels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom. Lot was sitting there, and when he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed with his face to the ground. ²"My lords," he said, "come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up early in the morning and be on your way again."

"Oh no," they replied. "We'll just spend the night out here in the city square."

³But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. Lot prepared a feast for them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast, and they ate. ⁴But before they retired for the night, all the men of Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house. ⁵They shouted to Lot, "Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!"

⁶So Lot stepped outside to talk to them, shutting the door behind him. ⁷"Please, my brothers," he begged, "don't do such a wicked thing. ⁸Look, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you wish. But please, leave these men alone, for they are my guests and are under my protection."

⁹"Stand back!" they shouted. "This fellow came to town as an outsider, and now he's act-

ing like our judge! We'll treat you far worse than those other men!" And they lunged toward Lot to break down the door.

¹⁰But the two angels* reached out, pulled Lot into the house, and bolted the door. ¹¹Then they blinded all the men, young and old, who were at the door of the house, so they gave up trying to get inside.

¹²Meanwhile, the angels questioned Lot. "Do you have any other relatives here in the city?" they asked. "Get them out of this place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else.

¹³For we are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the LORD, and he has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁴So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters' fiancés, "Quick, get out of the city! The LORD is about to destroy it." But the young men thought he was only joking.

¹⁵At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!"

¹⁶When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful. ¹⁷When they were safely out of the city, one of the angels ordered, "Run for your lives! And don't look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!"

¹⁸"Oh no, my lord!" Lot begged. ¹⁹"You have been so gracious to me and saved my life, and you have shown such great kindness. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. ²⁰See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead; don't you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved."

²¹"All right," the angel said, "I will grant your request. I will not destroy the little village. ²²But hurry! Escape to it, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." (This explains why that village was known as Zoar, which means "little place.")

²³Lot reached the village just as the sun was rising over the horizon. ²⁴Then the LORD rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁵He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, wiping out all the people and every bit of vegetation. ²⁶But Lot's wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

²⁷Abraham got up early that morning and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the LORD's presence. ²⁸He looked out across the plain toward Sodom and Gomorrah and watched as columns of smoke rose from the cities like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹But God had listened to Abraham's request and kept Lot safe, removing him from the disaster that engulfed the cities on the plain.

Lot and His Daughters

³⁰Afterward Lot left Zoar because he was afraid of the people there, and he went to live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters.

³¹One day the older daughter said to her sister, "There are no men left anywhere in this entire area, so we can't get married like everyone else. And our father will soon be too old to have children. ³²Come, let's get him drunk with wine, and then we will have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father."

³³So that night they got him drunk with wine, and the older daughter went in and had intercourse with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁴The next morning the older daughter said to her younger sister, "I had sex with our father last night. Let's get him drunk with wine again tonight, and you go in and have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father." ³⁵So that night they got him drunk with wine again, and the younger daughter went in and had intercourse with him. As before, he was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁶As a result, both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their own father. ³⁷When the older daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Moab.* He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Moabites. ³⁸When the younger daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Ben-ammi.* He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Ammonites.

CHAPTER 20

Abraham Deceives Abimelech

Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, ²Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

³But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!"

⁴But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? ⁵Didn't Abraham tell me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'Yes, he is my brother.' I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean."

⁶In the dream God responded, "Yes, I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don't return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die."

⁸Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. ⁹Then Abimelech called for Abraham. "What have you done to us?" he demanded. "What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! ¹⁰Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?"

¹¹Abraham replied, "I thought, 'This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.' ¹²And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. ¹³When God called me to leave my father's home and to travel from place to place, I told her, 'Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.'"

¹⁴Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. ¹⁵Then Abimelech said, "Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live." ¹⁶And he said to Sarah, "Look, I am giving your 'brother' 1,000 pieces of silver* in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared."

¹⁷Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. ¹⁸For the LORD had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham's wife, Sarah.

CHAPTER 21

The Birth of Isaac

The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. ²She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God

19:37 *Moab* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "from father." 19:38 *Ben-ammi* means "son of my kinsman."

20:16 Hebrew *1,000 (shekels) of silver*, about 25 pounds or 11.4 kilograms in weight.

had said it would. ³And Abraham named their son Isaac. ⁴Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. ⁵Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

⁶And Sarah declared, “God has brought me laughter.* All who hear about this will laugh with me. ⁷Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!”

Hagar and Ishmael Are Sent Away

⁸When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. ⁹But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac.* ¹⁰So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it!”

¹¹This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. ¹²But God told Abraham, “Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. ¹³But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar’s son because he is your son, too.”

¹⁴So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar’s shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards* away. “I don’t want to watch the boy die,” she said, as she burst into tears.

¹⁷But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, “Hagar, what’s wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants.”

¹⁹Then God opened Hagar’s eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, ²¹and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.

Abraham’s Covenant with Abimelech

²²About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham.

21:6 The name *Isaac* means “he laughs.” 21:9 As in Greek version and Latin Vulgate; Hebrew lacks *of her son, Isaac*. 21:16 Hebrew *a bowshot*. 21:33 Hebrew *El-Olam*.

“God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do,” Abimelech said. ²³“Swear to me in God’s name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner.”

²⁴Abraham replied, “Yes, I swear to it!”

²⁵Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech’s servants had taken by force from Abraham’s servants.

²⁶“This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Abimelech answered. “I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before.”

²⁷Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech, and they made a treaty. ²⁸But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves. ²⁹Abimelech asked, “Why have you set these seven apart from the others?”

³⁰Abraham replied, “Please accept these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well.” ³¹Then he named the place Beersheba (which means “well of the oath”), because that was where they had sworn the oath.

³²After making their covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines. ³³Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he worshiped the LORD, the Eternal God.* ³⁴And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

CHAPTER 22

Abraham’s Faith Tested

Some time later, God tested Abraham’s faith. “Abraham!” God called.

“Yes,” he replied. “Here I am.”

²“Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.”

³The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵“Stay here with the donkey,” Abraham told the servants. “The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back.”

⁶So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt

offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, ⁷Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

⁸"God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

⁹When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. ¹¹At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"

¹²"Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

¹³Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the LORD will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

¹⁵Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. ¹⁶"This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that ¹⁷I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants* beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. ¹⁸And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

¹⁹Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

²⁰Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor's wife, had borne Nahor eight sons. ²¹The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by Kemuel (the ancestor of the Arameans), ²²Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel. ²³(Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) In addition to these eight sons from Milcah, ²⁴Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

CHAPTER 23

The Burial of Sarah

When Sarah was 127 years old, ²she died at Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

³Then, leaving her body, he said to the Hittite elders, ⁴"Here I am, a stranger and a foreigner among you. Please sell me a piece of land so I can give my wife a proper burial."

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶"Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way."

⁷Then Abraham bowed low before the Hittites ⁸and said, "Since you are willing to help me in this way, be so kind as to ask Ephron son of Zohar ⁹to let me buy his cave at Machpelah, down at the end of his field. I will pay the full price in the presence of witnesses, so I will have a permanent burial place for my family."

¹⁰Ephron was sitting there among the others, and he answered Abraham as the others listened, speaking publicly before all the Hittite elders of the town. ¹¹"No, my lord," he said to Abraham, "please listen to me. I will give you the field and the cave. Here in the presence of my people, I give it to you. Go and bury your dead."

¹²Abraham again bowed low before the citizens of the land, ¹³and he replied to Ephron as everyone listened. "No, listen to me. I will buy it from you. Let me pay the full price for the field so I can bury my dead there."

¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵"My lord, please listen to me. The land is worth 400 pieces* of silver, but what is that between friends? Go ahead and bury your dead."

¹⁶So Abraham agreed to Ephron's price and paid the amount he had suggested—400 pieces of silver, weighed according to the market standard. The Hittite elders witnessed the transaction.

¹⁷So Abraham bought the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah, near Mamre. This included the field itself, the cave that was in it, and all the surrounding trees. ¹⁸It was transferred to Abraham as his permanent possession in the presence of the Hittite elders at the city gate. ¹⁹Then Abraham buried his wife, Sarah, there in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre (also called Hebron). ²⁰So the field and the cave were transferred from the Hittites to Abraham for use as a permanent burial place.

CHAPTER 24

A Wife for Isaac

Abraham was now a very old man, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ²One day Abraham said to his oldest servant, the man in charge of his household, "Take an oath by putting your hand under my thigh. ³Swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ⁴Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

⁵The servant asked, "But what if I can't find a young woman who is willing to travel so far from home? Should I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives in the land you came from?"

⁶"No!" Abraham responded. "Be careful never to take my son there. ⁷For the LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my descendants.* He will send his angel ahead of you, and he will see to it that you find a wife there for my son. ⁸If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath of mine. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there."

⁹So the servant took an oath by putting his hand under the thigh of his master, Abraham. He swore to follow Abraham's instructions. ¹⁰Then he loaded ten of Abraham's camels with all kinds of expensive gifts from his master, and he traveled to distant Aram-naharaim. There he went to the town where Abraham's brother Nahor had settled. ¹¹He made the camels kneel beside a well just outside the town. It was evening, and the women were coming out to draw water.

¹²"O LORD, God of my master, Abraham," he prayed. "Please give me success today, and show unflinching love to my master, Abraham. ¹³See, I am standing here beside this spring, and the young women of the town are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴This is my request. I will ask one of them, 'Please give me a drink from your jug.' If she says, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!'—let her be the one you have selected as Isaac's wife. This is how I will know that you have shown unflinching love to my master."

¹⁵Before he had finished praying, he saw a young woman named Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah. ¹⁶Rebekah was very beautiful and old enough to be married, but she was still a virgin. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and

came up again. ¹⁷Running over to her, the servant said, "Please give me a little drink of water from your jug."

¹⁸"Yes, my lord," she answered, "have a drink." And she quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and gave him a drink. ¹⁹When she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels, too, until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰So she quickly emptied her jug into the watering trough and ran back to the well to draw water for all his camels.

²¹The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not the LORD had given him success in his mission. ²²Then at last, when the camels had finished drinking, he took out a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets* for her wrists.

²³"Whose daughter are you?" he asked. "And please tell me, would your father have any room to put us up for the night?"

²⁴"I am the daughter of Bethuel," she replied. "My grandparents are Nahor and Milcah. ²⁵Yes, we have plenty of straw and feed for the camels, and we have room for guests."

²⁶The man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. ²⁷"Praise the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham," he said. "The LORD has shown unflinching love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master's relatives."

²⁸The young woman ran home to tell her family everything that had happened. ²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, who ran out to meet the man at the spring. ³⁰He had seen the nose-ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man had said. So he rushed out to the spring, where the man was still standing beside his camels. ³¹Laban said to him, "Come and stay with us, you who are blessed by the LORD! Why are you standing here outside the town when I have a room all ready for you and a place prepared for the camels?"

³²So the man went home with Laban, and Laban unloaded the camels, gave him straw for their bedding, fed them, and provided water for the man and the camel drivers to wash their feet. ³³Then food was served. But Abraham's servant said, "I don't want to eat until I have told you why I have come."

"All right," Laban said, "tell us."

³⁴"I am Abraham's servant," he explained.

³⁵"And the LORD has greatly blessed my master; he has become a wealthy man. The LORD has given him flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many male and female servants and camels and donkeys.

24:7 Hebrew *seed*; also in 24:60. 24:22 Hebrew a gold nose-ring weighing a half shekel (0.2 ounces or 6 grams) and two gold bracelets weighing 10 shekels (4 ounces or 114 grams).

³⁶“When Sarah, my master’s wife, was very old, she gave birth to my master’s son, and my master has given him everything he owns. ³⁷And my master made me take an oath. He said, ‘Do not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ³⁸Go instead to my father’s house, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son.’

³⁹“But I said to my master, ‘What if I can’t find a young woman who is willing to go back with me?’ ⁴⁰He responded, ‘The LORD, in whose presence I have lived, will send his angel with you and will make your mission successful. Yes, you must find a wife for my son from among my relatives, from my father’s family. ⁴¹Then you will have fulfilled your obligation. But if you go to my relatives and they refuse to let her go with you, you will be free from my oath.’

⁴²“So today when I came to the spring, I prayed this prayer: ‘O LORD, God of my master, Abraham, please give me success on this mission. ⁴³See, I am standing here beside this spring. This is my request. When a young woman comes to draw water, I will say to her, ‘Please give me a little drink of water from your jug.’ ⁴⁴If she says, ‘Yes, have a drink, and I will draw water for your camels, too,’ let her be the one you have selected to be the wife of my master’s son.’

⁴⁵“Before I had finished praying in my heart, I saw Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ ⁴⁶She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, ‘Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!’ So I drank, and then she watered the camels.

⁴⁷“Then I asked, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She replied, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, and my grandparents are Nahor and Milcah.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

⁴⁸“Then I bowed low and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham, because he had led me straight to my master’s niece to be his son’s wife. ⁴⁹So tell me—will you or won’t you show unflinching love and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no, and then I’ll know what to do next.”

⁵⁰Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “The LORD has obviously brought you here, so there is nothing we can say. ⁵¹Here is Rebekah; take her and go. Yes, let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has directed.”

⁵²When Abraham’s servant heard their answer, he bowed down to the ground and worshiped the LORD. ⁵³Then he brought out silver and gold jewelry and clothing and presented them to Rebekah. He also gave expensive pres-

ents to her brother and mother. ⁵⁴Then they ate their meal, and the servant and the men with him stayed there overnight.

But early the next morning, Abraham’s servant said, “Send me back to my master.”

⁵⁵“But we want Rebekah to stay with us at least ten days,” her brother and mother said. “Then she can go.”

⁵⁶But he said, “Don’t delay me. The LORD has made my mission successful; now send me back so I can return to my master.”

⁵⁷“Well,” they said, “we’ll call Rebekah and ask her what she thinks.” ⁵⁸So they called Rebekah. “Are you willing to go with this man?” they asked her.

And she replied, “Yes, I will go.”

⁵⁹So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham’s servant and his men. The woman who had been Rebekah’s childhood nurse went along with her. ⁶⁰They gave her this blessing as she parted:

“Our sister, may you become
the mother of many millions!
May your descendants be strong
and conquer the cities of their enemies.”

⁶¹Then Rebekah and her servant girls mounted the camels and followed the man. So Abraham’s servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

⁶²Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahai-roi. ⁶³One evening as he was walking and meditating in the fields, he looked up and saw the camels coming. ⁶⁴When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she quickly dismounted from her camel. ⁶⁵“Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?” she asked the servant.

And he replied, “It is my master.” So Rebekah covered her face with her veil. ⁶⁶Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

⁶⁷And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah’s tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.

CHAPTER 25

The Death of Abraham

Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah. ²She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan’s descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites. ⁴Midian’s sons were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. These were all descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

⁵Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac. ⁶But before he died, he gave gifts to

the sons of his concubines and sent them off to a land in the east, away from Isaac.

⁷Abraham lived for 175 years, ⁸and he died at a ripe old age, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. ⁹His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. ¹⁰This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah. ¹¹After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.

Ishmael's Descendants

¹²This is the account of the family of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. ¹³Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael's descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes named after them, listed according to the places they settled and camped. ¹⁷Ishmael lived for 137 years. Then he breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. ¹⁸Ishmael's descendants occupied the region from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. There they lived in open hostility toward all their relatives.*

The Births of Esau and Jacob

¹⁹This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. ²⁰When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The LORD answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. ²²But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the LORD about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

²³And the LORD told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."

²⁴And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! ²⁵The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau.* ²⁶Then the other twin was

born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob.* Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

Esau Sells His Birthright

²⁷As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. ²⁸Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. ³⁰Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

³¹"All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

³²"Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

³³But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

CHAPTER 26

Isaac Deceives Abimelech

A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

²The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. ³Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants,* just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. ⁴I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. ⁵I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions." ⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

⁷When the men who lived there asked Isaac about his wife, Rebekah, he said, "She is my sister." He was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "They will kill me to get her, because she is so beautiful." ⁸But some time later, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out his window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah.

25:18 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 25:25 *Esau* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "hair." 25:26 *Jacob* sounds like the Hebrew words for "heel" and "deceiver." 26:3 Hebrew *seed*; also in 26:4, 24.

⁹Immediately, Abimelech called for Isaac and exclaimed, "She is obviously your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

"Because I was afraid someone would kill me to get her from me," Isaac replied.

¹⁰"How could you do this to us?" Abimelech exclaimed. "One of my people might easily have taken your wife and slept with her, and you would have made us guilty of great sin."

¹¹Then Abimelech issued a public proclamation: "Anyone who touches this man or his wife will be put to death!"

Conflict over Water Rights

¹²When Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the LORD blessed him. ¹³He became a very rich man, and his wealth continued to grow. ¹⁴He acquired so many flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and servants that the Philistines became jealous of him. ¹⁵So the Philistines filled up all of Isaac's wells with dirt. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

¹⁶Finally, Abimelech ordered Isaac to leave the country. "Go somewhere else," he said, "for you have become too powerful for us."

¹⁷So Isaac moved away to the Gerar Valley, where he set up their tents and settled down.

¹⁸He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death. Isaac also restored the names Abraham had given them.

¹⁹Isaac's servants also dug in the Gerar Valley and discovered a well of fresh water. ²⁰But then the shepherds from Gerar came and claimed the spring. "This is our water," they said, and they argued over it with Isaac's herdsmen. So Isaac named the well Esek (which means "argument"). ²¹Isaac's men then dug another well, but again there was a dispute over it. So Isaac named it Sitnah (which means "hostility"). ²²Abandoning that one, Isaac moved on and dug another well. This time there was no dispute over it, so Isaac named the place Rehoboth (which means "open space"), for he said, "At last the LORD has created enough space for us to prosper in this land."

²³From there Isaac moved to Beersheba, ²⁴where the LORD appeared to him on the night of his arrival. "I am the God of your father, Abraham," he said. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant." ²⁵Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the LORD. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug another well.

Isaac's Covenant with Abimelech

²⁶One day King Abimelech came from Gerar with his adviser, Ahuzzath, and also Phicol, his army commander. ²⁷"Why have you come here?" Isaac asked. "You obviously hate me, since you kicked me off your land."

²⁸They replied, "We can plainly see that the LORD is with you. So we want to enter into a sworn treaty with you. Let's make a covenant. ²⁹Swear that you will not harm us, just as we have never troubled you. We have always treated you well, and we sent you away from us in peace. And now look how the LORD has blessed you!"

³⁰So Isaac prepared a covenant feast to celebrate the treaty, and they ate and drank together. ³¹Early the next morning, they each took a solemn oath not to interfere with each other. Then Isaac sent them home again, and they left him in peace.

³²That very day Isaac's servants came and told him about a new well they had dug. "We've found water!" they exclaimed. ³³So Isaac named the well Shibah (which means "oath"). And to this day the town that grew up there is called Beersheba (which means "well of the oath").

³⁴At the age of forty, Esau married two Hittite wives: Judith, the daughter of Beeri, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon. ³⁵But Esau's wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

CHAPTER 27

Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing

One day when Isaac was old and turning blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, "My son."

"Yes, Father?" Esau replied.

²"I am an old man now," Isaac said, "and I don't know when I may die. ³Take your bow and a quiver full of arrows, and go out into the open country to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴Prepare my favorite dish, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die."

⁵But Rebekah overheard what Isaac had said to his son Esau. So when Esau left to hunt for the wild game, ⁶she said to her son Jacob, "Listen. I overheard your father say to Esau, ⁷'Bring me some wild game and prepare me a delicious meal. Then I will bless you in the LORD's presence before I die.' ⁸Now, my son, listen to me. Do exactly as I tell you. ⁹Go out to the flocks, and bring me two fine young goats. I'll use them to prepare your father's favorite dish. ¹⁰Then take the food to your father so he can eat it and bless you before he dies."

¹¹“But look,” Jacob replied to Rebekah, “my brother, Esau, is a hairy man, and my skin is smooth. ¹²What if my father touches me? He’ll see that I’m trying to trick him, and then he’ll curse me instead of blessing me.”

¹³But his mother replied, “Then let the curse fall on me, my son! Just do what I tell you. Go out and get the goats for me!”

¹⁴So Jacob went out and got the young goats for his mother. Rebekah took them and prepared a delicious meal, just the way Isaac liked it. ¹⁵Then she took Esau’s favorite clothes, which were there in the house, and gave them to her younger son, Jacob. ¹⁶She covered his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skin of the young goats. ¹⁷Then she gave Jacob the delicious meal, including freshly baked bread.

¹⁸So Jacob took the food to his father. “My father?” he said.

“Yes, my son,” Isaac answered. “Who are you—Esau or Jacob?”

¹⁹Jacob replied, “It’s Esau, your firstborn son. I’ve done as you told me. Here is the wild game. Now sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing.”

²⁰Isaac asked, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?”

“The LORD your God put it in my path!” Jacob replied.

²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come closer so I can touch you and make sure that you really are Esau.” ²²So Jacob went closer to his father, and Isaac touched him. “The voice is Jacob’s, but the hands are Esau’s,” Isaac said. ²³But he did not recognize Jacob, because Jacob’s hands felt hairy just like Esau’s. So Isaac prepared to bless Jacob. ²⁴“But are you really my son Esau?” he asked.

“Yes, I am,” Jacob replied.

²⁵Then Isaac said, “Now, my son, bring me the wild game. Let me eat it, and then I will give you my blessing.” So Jacob took the food to his father, and Isaac ate it. He also drank the wine that Jacob served him. ²⁶Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come a little closer and kiss me, my son.”

²⁷So Jacob went over and kissed him. And when Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he was finally convinced, and he blessed his son. He said, “Ah! The smell of my son is like the smell of the outdoors, which the LORD has blessed!

²⁸“From the dew of heaven
and the richness of the earth,
may God always give you abundant harvests
of grain
and bountiful new wine.

²⁹May many nations become your servants,
and may they bow down to you.

May you be the master over your brothers,
and may your mother’s sons bow down
to you.

All who curse you will be cursed,
and all who bless you will be blessed.”

³⁰As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and almost before Jacob had left his father, Esau returned from his hunt. ³¹Esau prepared a delicious meal and brought it to his father. Then he said, “Sit up, my father, and eat my wild game so you can give me your blessing.”

³²But Isaac asked him, “Who are you?”

Esau replied, “It’s your son, your firstborn son, Esau.”

³³Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, “Then who just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him just before you came. And yes, that blessing must stand!”

³⁴When Esau heard his father’s words, he let out a loud and bitter cry. “Oh my father, what about me? Bless me, too!” he begged.

³⁵But Isaac said, “Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing.”

³⁶Esau exclaimed, “No wonder his name is Jacob, for now he has cheated me twice.* First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven’t you saved even one blessing for me?”

³⁷Isaac said to Esau, “I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is left for me to give you, my son?”

³⁸Esau pleaded, “But do you have only one blessing? Oh my father, bless me, too!” Then Esau broke down and wept.

³⁹Finally, his father, Isaac, said to him,

“You will live away from the richness of the earth,
and away from the dew of the heaven
above.

⁴⁰You will live by your sword,
and you will serve your brother.
But when you decide to break free,
you will shake his yoke from your neck.”

Jacob Flees to Paddan-Aram

⁴¹From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: “I will soon be mourning my father’s death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob.”

⁴²But Rebekah heard about Esau’s plans. So

she sent for Jacob and told him, “Listen, Esau is consoling himself by plotting to kill you. ⁴³So listen carefully, my son. Get ready and flee to my brother, Laban, in Haran. ⁴⁴Stay there with him until your brother cools off. ⁴⁵When he calms down and forgets what you have done to him, I will send for you to come back. Why should I lose both of you in one day?”

⁴⁶Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I’m sick and tired of these local Hittite women! I would rather die than see Jacob marry one of them.”

CHAPTER 28

So Isaac called for Jacob, blessed him, and said, “You must not marry any of these Canaanite women. ²Instead, go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of your grandfather Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban’s daughters. ³May God Almighty* bless you and give you many children. And may your descendants multiply and become many nations! ⁴May God pass on to you and your descendants* the blessings he promised to Abraham. May you own this land where you are now living as a foreigner, for God gave this land to Abraham.”

⁵So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle Laban, his mother’s brother, the son of Bethuel the Aramean.

⁶Esau knew that his father, Isaac, had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to find a wife, and that he had warned Jacob, “You must not marry a Canaanite woman.” ⁷He also knew that Jacob had obeyed his parents and gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸It was now very clear to Esau that his father did not like the local Canaanite women. ⁹So Esau visited his uncle Ishmael’s family and married one of Ishmael’s daughters, in addition to the wives he already had. His new wife’s name was Mahalath. She was the sister of Nebaioth and the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son.

Jacob’s Dream at Bethel

¹⁰Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. ¹²As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

¹³At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, “I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descen-

dants. ¹⁴Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. ¹⁵What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.”

¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” ¹⁷But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!”

¹⁸The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. ¹⁹He named that place Bethel (which means “house of God”), although it was previously called Luz.

²⁰Then Jacob made this vow: “If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, ²¹and if I return safely to my father’s home, then the LORD will certainly be my God. ²²And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me.”

CHAPTER 29

Jacob Arrives at Paddan-Aram

Then Jacob hurried on, finally arriving in the land of the east. ²He saw a well in the distance. Three flocks of sheep and goats lay in an open field beside it, waiting to be watered. But a heavy stone covered the mouth of the well.

³It was the custom there to wait for all the flocks to arrive before removing the stone and watering the animals. Afterward the stone would be placed back over the mouth of the well. ⁴Jacob went over to the shepherds and asked, “Where are you from, my friends?”

“We are from Haran,” they answered.

⁵“Do you know a man there named Laban, the grandson of Nahor?” he asked.

“Yes, we do,” they replied.

⁶“Is he doing well?” Jacob asked.

“Yes, he’s well,” they answered. “Look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the flock now.”

⁷Jacob said, “Look, it’s still broad daylight—too early to round up the animals. Why don’t you water the sheep and goats so they can get back out to pasture?”

⁸“We can’t water the animals until all the flocks have arrived,” they replied. “Then the shepherds move the stone from the mouth of the well, and we water all the sheep and goats.”

⁹Jacob was still talking with them when Rachel arrived with her father’s flock, for she was a shepherd. ¹⁰And because Rachel was his cousin—the daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother—and because the sheep and goats belonged to his uncle Laban, Jacob went over to the well and moved the stone from its mouth and watered his uncle’s flock. ¹¹Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and he wept aloud. ¹²He explained to Rachel that he was her cousin on her father’s side—the son of her aunt Rebekah. So Rachel quickly ran and told her father, Laban.

¹³As soon as Laban heard that his nephew Jacob had arrived, he ran out to meet him. He embraced and kissed him and brought him home. When Jacob had told him his story, ¹⁴Laban exclaimed, “You really are my own flesh and blood!”

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with Laban for about a month, ¹⁵Laban said to him, “You shouldn’t work for me without pay just because we are relatives. Tell me how much your wages should be.”

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. ¹⁷There was no sparkle in Leah’s eyes,* but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face. ¹⁸Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, “I’ll work for you for seven years if you’ll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife.”

¹⁹“Agreed!” Laban replied. “I’d rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me.” ²⁰So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

²¹Finally, the time came for him to marry her. “I have fulfilled my agreement,” Jacob said to Laban. “Now give me my wife so I can sleep with her.”

²²So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast. ²³But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. ²⁴(Laban had given Leah a servant, Zilpah, to be her maid.)

²⁵But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! “What have you done to me?” Jacob raged at Laban. “I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?”

²⁶“It’s not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn,” Laban replied. ²⁷“But wait until the bridal week is over, then we’ll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me.”

²⁸So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too. ²⁹(Laban gave Rachel a servant, Bilhah, to be her maid.) ³⁰So Jacob slept with Rachel, too, and he loved her much more than Leah. He then stayed and worked for Laban the additional seven years.

Jacob’s Many Children

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to have children, but Rachel could not conceive. ³²So Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben,* for she said, “The LORD has noticed my misery, and now my husband will love me.”

³³She soon became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. She named him Simeon,* for she said, “The LORD heard that I was unloved and has given me another son.”

³⁴Then she became pregnant a third time and gave birth to another son. She named him Levi,* for she said, “Surely this time my husband will feel affection for me, since I have given him three sons!”

³⁵Once again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son. She named him Judah,* for she said, “Now I will praise the LORD!” And then she stopped having children.

CHAPTER 30

When Rachel saw that she wasn’t having any children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. She pleaded with Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!”

²Then Jacob became furious with Rachel. “Am I God?” he asked. “He’s the one who has kept you from having children!”

³Then Rachel told him, “Take my maid, Bilhah, and sleep with her. She will bear children for me,* and through her I can have a family, too.” ⁴So Rachel gave her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her. ⁵Bilhah became pregnant and presented him with a son. ⁶Rachel named him Dan,* for she said, “God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son.” ⁷Then Bilhah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a second son. ⁸Rachel named him Naphtali,* for she said, “I have struggled hard with my sister, and I’m winning!”

29:17 Or *Leah had dull eyes, or Leah had soft eyes*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 29:32 *Reuben* means “one who looks a son!” It also sounds like the Hebrew for “He has seen my misery.” 29:33 *Simeon* probably means “one who hears.” 29:34 *Levi* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “being attached” or “feeling affection for.” 29:35 *Judah* is related to the Hebrew term for “praise.” 30:3 Hebrew *bear children on my knees*. 30:6 *Dan* means “he judged” or “he vindicated.” 30:8 *Naphtali* means “my struggle.”

⁹Meanwhile, Leah realized that she wasn't getting pregnant anymore, so she took her servant, Zilpah, and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰Soon Zilpah presented him with a son. ¹¹Leah named him Gad,* for she said, "How fortunate I am!" ¹²Then Zilpah gave Jacob a second son. ¹³And Leah named him Asher,* for she said, "What joy is mine! Now the other women will celebrate with me."

¹⁴One day during the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes growing in a field and brought them to his mother, Leah. Rachel begged Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

¹⁵But Leah angrily replied, "Wasn't it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son's mandrakes, too?"

Rachel answered, "I will let Jacob sleep with you tonight if you give me some of the mandrakes."

¹⁶So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. "You must come and sleep with me tonight!" she said. "I have paid for you with some mandrakes that my son found." So that night he slept with Leah. ¹⁷And God answered Leah's prayers. She became pregnant again and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob. ¹⁸She named him Issachar,* for she said, "God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife." ¹⁹Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob. ²⁰She named him Zebulun,* for she said, "God has given me a good reward. Now my husband will treat me with respect, for I have given him six sons." ²¹Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²²Then God remembered Rachel's plight and answered her prayers by enabling her to have children. ²³She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. "God has removed my disgrace," she said. ²⁴And she named him Joseph,* for she said, "May the LORD add yet another son to my family."

Jacob's Wealth Increases

²⁵Soon after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Please release me so I can go home to my own country. ²⁶Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them by serving you, and let me be on my way. You certainly know how hard I have worked for you."

²⁷"Please listen to me," Laban replied. "I have become wealthy, for* the LORD has blessed me because of you. ²⁸Tell me how much I owe you. Whatever it is, I'll pay it."

²⁹Jacob replied, "You know how hard I've worked for you, and how your flocks and herds have grown under my care. ³⁰You had little indeed before I came, but your wealth has increased enormously. The LORD has blessed you through everything I've done. But now, what about me? When can I start providing for my own family?"

³¹"What wages do you want?" Laban asked again.

Jacob replied, "Don't give me anything. Just do this one thing, and I'll continue to tend and watch over your flocks. ³²Let me inspect your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the black sheep. Give these to me as my wages. ³³In the future, when you check on the animals you have given me as my wages, you'll see that I have been honest. If you find in my flock any goats without speckles or spots, or any sheep that are not black, you will know that I have stolen them from you."

³⁴"All right," Laban replied. "It will be as you say." ³⁵But that very day Laban went out and removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted or had white patches, and all the black sheep. He placed them in the care of his own sons, ³⁶who took them a three-days' journey from where Jacob was. Meanwhile, Jacob stayed and cared for the rest of Laban's flock.

³⁷Then Jacob took some fresh branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of bark, making white streaks on them. ³⁸Then he placed these peeled branches in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, for that was where they mated. ³⁹And when they mated in front of the white-streaked branches, they gave birth to young that were streaked, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰Jacob separated those lambs from Laban's flock. And at mating time he turned the flock to face Laban's animals that were streaked or black. This is how he built his own flock instead of increasing Laban's.

⁴¹Whenever the stronger females were ready to mate, Jacob would place the peeled branches in the watering troughs in front of them. Then they would mate in front of the branches. ⁴²But he didn't do this with the weaker ones, so the weaker lambs belonged to Laban, and the stronger ones were Jacob's. ⁴³As a result, Jacob became very wealthy, with large flocks of sheep and goats, female and male servants, and many camels and donkeys.

30:11 *Gad* means "good fortune." 30:13 *Asher* means "happy." 30:18 *Issachar* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "reward." 30:20 *Zebulun* probably means "honor." 30:24 *Joseph* means "may he add." 30:27 *Or I have learned by divination that.*

CHAPTER 31

Jacob Flees from Laban

But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were grumbling about him. "Jacob has robbed our father of everything!" they said. "He has gained all his wealth at our father's expense." ²And Jacob began to notice a change in Laban's attitude toward him.

³Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you."

⁴So Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to the field where he was watching his flock. ⁵He said to them, "I have noticed that your father's attitude toward me has changed. But the God of my father has been with me. ⁶You know how hard I have worked for your father, ⁷but he has cheated me, changing my wages ten times. But God has not allowed him to do me any harm. ⁸For if he said, 'The speckled animals will be your wages,' the whole flock began to produce speckled young. And when he changed his mind and said, 'The striped animals will be your wages,' then the whole flock produced striped young. ⁹In this way, God has taken your father's animals and given them to me.

¹⁰"One time during the mating season, I had a dream and saw that the male goats mating with the females were streaked, speckled, and spotted. ¹¹Then in my dream, the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' And I replied, 'Yes, here I am.'

¹²"The angel said, 'Look up, and you will see that only the streaked, speckled, and spotted males are mating with the females of your flock. For I have seen how Laban has treated you. ¹³I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel,* the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made your vow to me. Now get ready and leave this country and return to the land of your birth.'"

¹⁴Rachel and Leah responded, "That's fine with us! We won't inherit any of our father's wealth anyway. ¹⁵He has reduced our rights to those of foreign women. And after he sold us, he wasted the money you paid him for us. ¹⁶All the wealth God has given you from our father legally belongs to us and our children. So go ahead and do whatever God has told you."

¹⁷So Jacob put his wives and children on camels, ¹⁸and he drove all his livestock in front of him. He packed all the belongings he had acquired in Paddan-aram and set out for the land of Canaan, where his father, Isaac, lived. ¹⁹At the time they left, Laban was some distance away, shearing his sheep. Rachel stole her father's household idols and took them with her. ²⁰Jacob outwitted Laban the Aramean, for they

set out secretly and never told Laban they were leaving. ²¹So Jacob took all his possessions with him and crossed the Euphrates River,* heading for the hill country of Gilead.

Laban Pursues Jacob

²²Three days later, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. ²³So he gathered a group of his relatives and set out in hot pursuit. He caught up with Jacob seven days later in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴But the previous night God had appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and told him, "I'm warning you—leave Jacob alone!"

²⁵Laban caught up with Jacob as he was camped in the hill country of Gilead, and he set up his camp not far from Jacob's. ²⁶"What do you mean by deceiving me like this?" Laban demanded. "How dare you drag my daughters away like prisoners of war? ²⁷Why did you slip away secretly? Why did you deceive me? And why didn't you say you wanted to leave? I would have given you a farewell feast, with singing and music, accompanied by tambourines and harps. ²⁸Why didn't you let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren and tell them good-bye? You have acted very foolishly! ²⁹I could destroy you, but the God of your father appeared to me last night and warned me, 'Leave Jacob alone!' ³⁰I can understand your feeling that you must go, and your intense longing for your father's home. But why have you stolen my gods?"

³¹"I rushed away because I was afraid," Jacob answered. "I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. ³²But as for your gods, see if you can find them, and let the person who has taken them die! And if you find anything else that belongs to you, identify it before all these relatives of ours, and I will give it back!" But Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the household idols.

³³Laban went first into Jacob's tent to search there, then into Leah's, and then the tents of the two servant wives—but he found nothing. Finally, he went into Rachel's tent. ³⁴But Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them in her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. When Laban had thoroughly searched her tent without finding them, ³⁵she said to her father, "Please, sir, forgive me if I don't get up for you. I'm having my monthly period." So Laban continued his search, but he could not find the household idols.

³⁶Then Jacob became very angry, and he challenged Laban. "What's my crime?" he demanded. "What have I done wrong to make you chase after me as though I were a criminal? ³⁷You have rummaged through everything I

own. Now show me what you found that belongs to you! Set it out here in front of us, before our relatives, for all to see. Let them judge between us!

³⁸“For twenty years I have been with you, caring for your flocks. In all that time your sheep and goats never miscarried. In all those years I never used a single ram of yours for food. ³⁹If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, I never showed you the carcass and asked you to reduce the count of your flock. No, I took the loss myself! You made me pay for every stolen animal, whether it was taken in broad daylight or in the dark of night.

⁴⁰“I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights. ⁴¹Yes, for twenty years I slaved in your house! I worked for fourteen years earning your two daughters, and then six more years for your flock. And you changed my wages ten times!⁴² In fact, if the God of my father had not been on my side—the God of Abraham and the fearsome God of Isaac*—you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen your abuse and my hard work. That is why he appeared to you last night and rebuked you!”

Jacob's Treaty with Laban

⁴³Then Laban replied to Jacob, “These women are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, and these flocks are my flocks—in fact, everything you see is mine. But what can I do now about my daughters and their children? ⁴⁴So come, let’s make a covenant, you and I, and it will be a witness to our commitment.”

⁴⁵So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument. ⁴⁶Then he told his family members, “Gather some stones.” So they gathered stones and piled them in a heap. Then Jacob and Laban sat down beside the pile of stones to eat a covenant meal. ⁴⁷To commemorate the event, Laban called the place Jegar-sahadutha (which means “witness pile” in Aramaic), and Jacob called it Galeed (which means “witness pile” in Hebrew).

⁴⁸Then Laban declared, “This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of the covenant we have made today.” This explains why it was called Galeed—“Witness Pile.” ⁴⁹But it was also called Mizpah (which means “watchtower”), for Laban said, “May the LORD keep watch between us to make sure that we keep this covenant when we are out of each other’s sight. ⁵⁰If you mistreat my daughters or if you marry other wives, God will see it even if no one else does. He is a witness to this covenant between us.

31:42 Or and the Fear of Isaac. 31:53 Or the Fear of his father, Isaac. 31:55 Verse 31:55 is numbered 32:1 in Hebrew text. 32:1 Verses 32:1-32 are numbered 32:2-33 in Hebrew text. 32:2 Mahanaim means “two camps.”

⁵¹“See this pile of stones,” Laban continued, “and see this monument I have set between us. ⁵²They stand between us as witnesses of our vows. I will never pass this pile of stones to harm you, and you must never pass these stones or this monument to harm me. ⁵³I call on the God of our ancestors—the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of my grandfather Nahor—to serve as a judge between us.”

So Jacob took an oath before the fearsome God of his father, Isaac,* to respect the boundary line. ⁵⁴Then Jacob offered a sacrifice to God there on the mountain and invited everyone to a covenant feast. After they had eaten, they spent the night on the mountain.

⁵⁵*Laban got up early the next morning, and he kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.

CHAPTER 32

¹*As Jacob started on his way again, angels of God came to meet him. ²When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed, “This is God’s camp!” So he named the place Mahanaim.*

Jacob Sends Gifts to Esau

³Then Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother, Esau, who was living in the region of Seir in the land of Edom. ⁴He told them, “Give this message to my master Esau: ‘Humble greetings from your servant Jacob. Until now I have been living with Uncle Laban, ⁵and now I own cattle, donkeys, flocks of sheep and goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have sent these messengers to inform my lord of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to me.’”

⁶After delivering the message, the messengers returned to Jacob and reported, “We met your brother, Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you—with an army of 400 men!” ⁷Jacob was terrified at the news. He divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two groups. ⁸He thought, “If Esau meets one group and attacks it, perhaps the other group can escape.”

⁹Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O LORD, you told me, ‘Return to your own land and to your relatives.’ And you promised me, ‘I will treat you kindly.’ ¹⁰I am not worthy of all the unending love and faithfulness you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps! ¹¹O LORD, please rescue me

from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children. ¹²But you promised me, 'I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count.'"

¹³Jacob stayed where he was for the night. Then he selected these gifts from his possessions to present to his brother, Esau: ¹⁴200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, ¹⁵30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. ¹⁶He divided these animals into herds and assigned each to different servants. Then he told his servants, "Go ahead of me with the animals, but keep some distance between the herds."

¹⁷He gave these instructions to the men leading the first group: "When my brother, Esau, meets you, he will ask, 'Whose servants are you? Where are you going? Who owns these animals?' ¹⁸You must reply, 'They belong to your servant Jacob, but they are a gift for his master Esau. Look, he is coming right behind us.'"

¹⁹Jacob gave the same instructions to the second and third herdsmen and to all who followed behind the herds: "You must say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. ²⁰And be sure to say, 'Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.'"

Jacob thought, "I will try to appease him by sending gifts ahead of me. When I see him in person, perhaps he will be friendly to me." ²¹So the gifts were sent on ahead, while Jacob himself spent that night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles with God

²²During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them. ²³After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions.

²⁴This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. ²⁵When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket. ²⁶Then the man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!"

But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷"What is your name?" the man asked.

He replied, "Jacob."

²⁸"Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "From now on you will be called

Israel,* because you have fought with God and with men and have won."

²⁹"Please tell me your name," Jacob said.

"Why do you want to know my name?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.

³⁰Jacob named the place Peniel (which means "face of God"), for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared."

³¹The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel,* and he was limping because of the injury to his hip.

³²(Even today the people of Israel don't eat the tendon near the hip socket because of what happened that night when the man strained the tendon of Jacob's hip.)

CHAPTER 33

Jacob and Esau Make Peace

Then Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and his two servant wives.

²He put the servant wives and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him. ⁴Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept.

⁵Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, "Who are these people with you?"

"These are the children God has graciously given to me, your servant," Jacob replied. ⁶Then the servant wives came forward with their children and bowed before him. ⁷Next came Leah with her children, and they bowed before him. Finally, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed before him.

⁸"And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?" Esau asked.

Jacob replied, "They are a gift, my lord, to ensure your friendship."

⁹"My brother, I have plenty," Esau answered. "Keep what you have for yourself."

¹⁰But Jacob insisted, "No, if I have found favor with you, please accept this gift from me. And what a relief to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the face of God! ¹¹Please take this gift I have brought you, for God has been very gracious to me. I have more than enough." And because Jacob insisted, Esau finally accepted the gift.

¹²"Well," Esau said, "let's be going. I will lead the way."

¹³But Jacob replied, "You can see, my lord, that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If

32:28 Jacob sounds like the Hebrew words for "heel" and "deceiver." *Israel* means "God fights." 32:31 Hebrew *Penuel*, a variant spelling of Peniel.

they are driven too hard, even for one day, all the animals could die. ¹⁴Please, my lord, go ahead of your servant. We will follow slowly, at a pace that is comfortable for the livestock and the children. I will meet you at Seir."

¹⁵"All right," Esau said, "but at least let me assign some of my men to guide and protect you."

Jacob responded, "That's not necessary. It's enough that you've received me warmly, my lord!"

¹⁶So Esau turned around and started back to Seir that same day. ¹⁷Jacob, on the other hand, traveled on to Succoth. There he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was named Succoth (which means "shelters").

¹⁸Later, having traveled all the way from Paddan-aram, Jacob arrived safely at the town of Shechem, in the land of Canaan. There he set up camp outside the town. ¹⁹Jacob bought the plot of land where he camped from the family of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for 100 pieces of silver.* ²⁰And there he built an altar and named it El-Elohe-Israel.*

CHAPTER 34

Revenge against Shechem

One day Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the young women who lived in the area. ²But when the local prince, Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, saw Dinah, he seized her and raped her. ³But then he fell in love with her, and he tried to win her affection with tender words. ⁴He said to his father, Hamor, "Get me this young girl. I want to marry her."

⁵Soon Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter, Dinah. But since his sons were out in the fields herding his livestock, he said nothing until they returned. ⁶Hamor, Shechem's father, came to discuss the matter with Jacob. ⁷Meanwhile, Jacob's sons had come in from the field as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious that their sister had been raped. Shechem had done a disgraceful thing against Jacob's family,* something that should never be done.

⁸Hamor tried to speak with Jacob and his sons. "My son Shechem is truly in love with your daughter," he said. "Please let him marry her. ⁹In fact, let's arrange other marriages, too. You give us your daughters for our sons, and we will give you our daughters for your sons. ¹⁰And you may live among us; the land is open to you! Settle here and trade with us. And feel free to buy property in the area."

¹¹Then Shechem himself spoke to Dinah's

father and brothers. "Please be kind to me, and let me marry her," he begged. "I will give you whatever you ask. ¹²No matter what dowry or gift you demand, I will gladly pay it—just give me the girl as my wife."

¹³But since Shechem had defiled their sister, Dinah, Jacob's sons responded deceitfully to Shechem and his father, Hamor. ¹⁴They said to them, "We couldn't possibly allow this, because you're not circumcised. It would be a disgrace for our sister to marry a man like you! ¹⁵But here is a solution. If every man among you will be circumcised like we are, ¹⁶then we will give you our daughters, and we'll take your daughters for ourselves. We will live among you and become one people. ¹⁷But if you don't agree to be circumcised, we will take her and be on our way."

¹⁸Hamor and his son Shechem agreed to their proposal. ¹⁹Shechem wasted no time in acting on this request, for he wanted Jacob's daughter desperately. Shechem was a highly respected member of his family, ²⁰and he went with his father, Hamor, to present this proposal to the leaders at the town gate.

²¹"These men are our friends," they said. "Let's invite them to live here among us and trade freely. Look, the land is large enough to hold them. We can take their daughters as wives and let them marry ours. ²²But they will consider staying here and becoming one people with us only if all of our men are circumcised, just as they are. ²³But if we do this, all their livestock and possessions will eventually be ours. Come, let's agree to their terms and let them settle here among us."

²⁴So all the men in the town council agreed with Hamor and Shechem, and every male in the town was circumcised. ²⁵But three days later, when their wounds were still sore, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, who were Dinah's full brothers, took their swords and entered the town without opposition. Then they slaughtered every male there, ²⁶including Hamor and his son Shechem. They killed them with their swords, then took Dinah from Shechem's house and returned to their camp.

²⁷Meanwhile, the rest of Jacob's sons arrived. Finding the men slaughtered, they plundered the town because their sister had been defiled there. ²⁸They seized all the flocks and herds and donkeys—everything they could lay their hands on, both inside the town and outside in the fields. ²⁹They looted all their wealth and plundered their houses. They also took all their little children and wives and led them away as captives.

33:19 Hebrew *100 kesitahs*; the value or weight of the kesitah is no longer known. 33:20 *El-Elohe-Israel* means "God, the God of Israel." 34:7 Hebrew *a disgraceful thing in Israel*.

³⁰Afterward Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have ruined me! You’ve made me stink among all the people of this land—among all the Canaanites and Perizzites. We are so few that they will join forces and crush us. I will be ruined, and my entire household will be wiped out!”

³¹“But why should we let him treat our sister like a prostitute?” they retorted angrily.

CHAPTER 35

Jacob’s Return to Bethel

Then God said to Jacob, “Get ready and move to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau.”

²So Jacob told everyone in his household, “Get rid of all your pagan idols, purify yourselves, and put on clean clothing. ³We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. He has been with me wherever I have gone.”

⁴So they gave Jacob all their pagan idols and earrings, and he buried them under the great tree near Shechem. ⁵As they set out, a terror from God spread over the people in all the towns of that area, so no one attacked Jacob’s family.

⁶Eventually, Jacob and his household arrived at Luz (also called Bethel) in Canaan. ⁷Jacob built an altar there and named the place El-bethel (which means “God of Bethel”), because God had appeared to him there when he was fleeing from his brother, Esau.

⁸Soon after this, Rebekah’s old nurse, Deborah, died. She was buried beneath the oak tree in the valley below Bethel. Ever since, the tree has been called Allon-bacuth (which means “oak of weeping”).

⁹Now that Jacob had returned from Paddan-aram, God appeared to him again at Bethel. God blessed him, ¹⁰saying, “Your name is Jacob, but you will not be called Jacob any longer. From now on your name will be Israel.”* So God renamed him Israel.

¹¹Then God said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Be fruitful and multiply. You will become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! ¹²And I will give you the land I once gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your descendants after you.” ¹³Then God went up from the place where he had spoken to Jacob.

¹⁴Jacob set up a stone pillar to mark the place where God had spoken to him. Then he

35:10 *Jacob* sounds like the Hebrew words for “heel” and “deceiver.” *Israel* means “God fights.” **35:21** Hebrew *Israel*; also in 35:22a. The names “Jacob” and “Israel” are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.

poured wine over it as an offering to God and anointed the pillar with olive oil. ¹⁵And Jacob named the place Bethel (which means “house of God”), because God had spoken to him there.

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

¹⁶Leaving Bethel, Jacob and his clan moved on toward Ephrath. But Rachel went into labor while they were still some distance away. Her labor pains were intense. ¹⁷After a very hard delivery, the midwife finally exclaimed, “Don’t be afraid—you have another son!” ¹⁸Rachel was about to die, but with her last breath she named the baby Ben-oni (which means “son of my sorrow”). The baby’s father, however, called him Benjamin (which means “son of my right hand”). ¹⁹So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰Jacob set up a stone monument over Rachel’s grave, and it can be seen there to this day.

²¹Then Jacob* traveled on and camped beyond Migdal-eder. ²²While he was living there, Reuben had intercourse with Bilhah, his father’s concubine, and Jacob soon heard about it.

These are the names of the twelve sons of Jacob:

²³The sons of Leah were Reuben (Jacob’s oldest son), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

²⁴The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁵The sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s servant, were Dan and Naphtali.

²⁶The sons of Zilpah, Leah’s servant, were Gad and Asher.

These are the names of the sons who were born to Jacob at Paddan-aram.

²⁷So Jacob returned to his father, Isaac, in Mamre, which is near Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had both lived as foreigners. ²⁸Isaac lived for 180 years. ²⁹Then he breathed his last and died at a ripe old age, joining his ancestors in death. And his sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him.

CHAPTER 36

Descendants of Esau

This is the account of the descendants of Esau (also known as Edom). ²Esau married two young women from Canaan: Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite. ³He also married his cousin Basemath, who was the daughter of Ishmael and the sister of Nebaioth. ⁴Adah gave birth to

a son named Eliphaz for Esau. Basemath gave birth to a son named Reuel. ⁵Oholibamah gave birth to sons named Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. All these sons were born to Esau in the land of Canaan.

⁶Esau took his wives, his children, and his entire household, along with his livestock and cattle—all the wealth he had acquired in the land of Canaan—and moved away from his brother, Jacob. ⁷There was not enough land to support them both because of all the livestock and possessions they had acquired. ⁸So Esau (also known as Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.

⁹This is the account of Esau's descendants, the Edomites, who lived in the hill country of Seir.

¹⁰These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah; and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹¹The descendants of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹²Timna, the concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, gave birth to a son named Amalek. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Adah.

¹³The descendants of Reuel were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁴Esau also had sons through Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon. Their names were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁵These are the descendants of Esau who became the leaders of various clans:

The descendants of Esau's oldest son, Eliphaz, became the leaders of the clans of Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. These are the clan leaders in the land of Edom who descended from Eliphaz. All these were descendants of Esau's wife Adah.

¹⁷The descendants of Esau's son Reuel became the leaders of the clans of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the clan leaders in the land of Edom who descended from Reuel. All these were descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁸The descendants of Esau and his wife Oholibamah became the leaders of the clans of Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the clan leaders who descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

¹⁹These are the clans descended from Esau (also known as Edom), identified by their clan leaders.

Original Peoples of Edom

²⁰These are the names of the tribes that descended from Seir the Horite. They lived in the land of Edom: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,

²¹Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These were the Horite clan leaders, the descendants of Seir, who lived in the land of Edom.

²²The descendants of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Lotan's sister was named Timna.

²³The descendants of Shobal were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

²⁴The descendants of Zibeon were Aiah and Anah. (This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs in the wilderness while he was grazing his father's donkeys.)

²⁵The descendants of Anah were his son, Dishon, and his daughter, Oholibamah.

²⁶The descendants of Dishon* were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

²⁷The descendants of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

²⁸The descendants of Dishan were Uz and Aran.

²⁹So these were the leaders of the Horite clans: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. The Horite clans are named after their clan leaders, who lived in the land of Seir.

Rulers of Edom

³¹These are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites*:

³²Bela son of Beor, who ruled in Edom from his city of Dinhabah.

³³When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became king in his place.

³⁴When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites became king in his place.

³⁵When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad became king in his place and ruled from the city of Avith. He was the one who defeated the Midianites in the land of Moab.

³⁶When Hadad died, Samlah from the city of Masrekah became king in his place.

³⁷When Samlah died, Shaul from the city of Rehoboth-on-the-River became king in his place.

³⁸When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Acbor became king in his place.

³⁹When Baal-hanan son of Acbor died, Hadad* became king in his place and ruled from the city of Pau. His wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred and granddaughter of Me-zahab.

36:26 Hebrew *Dishan*, a variant spelling of Dishon; compare 36:21, 28. 36:31 Or *before an Israelite king ruled over them*. 36:39 As in some Hebrew manuscripts, Samaritan Pentateuch, and Syriac version (see also 1 Chr 1:50); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Hadar*.

⁴⁰These are the names of the leaders of the clans descended from Esau, who lived in the places named for them: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴²Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³Magdiel, and Iram. These are the leaders of the clans of Edom, listed according to their settlements in the land they occupied. They all descended from Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites.

CHAPTER 37

Joseph's Dreams

So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner.

²This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. He worked for his half brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

³Jacob* loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe.* ⁴But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

⁵One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. ⁶"Listen to this dream," he said. ⁷"We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"

⁸His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

⁹Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"

¹⁰This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. "What kind of dream is that?" he asked. "Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?"

¹¹But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

¹²Soon after this, Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem. ¹³When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them."

"I'm ready to go," Joseph replied.

¹⁴"Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along," Jacob said. "Then come back and bring me a report." So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

¹⁵When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. "What are you looking for?" he asked.

¹⁶"I'm looking for my brothers," Joseph replied. "Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?"

¹⁷"Yes," the man told him. "They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, 'Let's go on to Dothan.'" So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

Joseph Sold into Slavery

¹⁸When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. ¹⁹"Here comes the dreamer!" they said. ²⁰"Come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, 'A wild animal has eaten him.' Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!"

²¹But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said. ²²"Why should we shed any blood? Let's just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he'll die without our laying a hand on him." Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

²³So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. ²⁴Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.

²⁶Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime.* ²⁷Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed. ²⁸So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces* of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

²⁹Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief.

37:3a Hebrew *Israel*; also in 37:13. See note on 35:21. 37:3b Traditionally rendered a *coat of many colors*. The exact meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 37:26 Hebrew *cover his blood*. 37:28 Hebrew *20 shekels*, about 8 ounces or 228 grams in weight.

³⁰Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, "The boy is gone! What will I do now?"

³¹Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. ³²They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?"

³³Their father recognized it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!" ³⁴Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time. ³⁵His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "I will go to my grave* mourning for my son," he would say, and then he would weep.

³⁶Meanwhile, the Midianite traders* arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

CHAPTER 38

Judah and Tamar

About this time, Judah left home and moved to Adullam, where he stayed with a man named Hirah. ²There he saw a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua, and he married her. When he slept with her, ³she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and he named the boy Er. ⁴Then she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son, and she named him Onan. ⁵And when she gave birth to a third son, she named him Shelah. At the time of Shelah's birth, they were living at Kezib.

⁶In the course of time, Judah arranged for his firstborn son, Er, to marry a young woman named Tamar. ⁷But Er was a wicked man in the LORD's sight, so the LORD took his life. ⁸Then Judah said to Er's brother Onan, "Go and marry Tamar, as our law requires of the brother of a man who has died. You must produce an heir for your brother."

⁹But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with his brother's wife, he spilled the semen on the ground. This prevented her from having a child who would belong to his brother. ¹⁰But the LORD considered it evil for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. So the LORD took Onan's life, too.

¹¹Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, "Go back to your parents' home and remain a widow until my son Shelah is old enough to marry you." (But Judah didn't really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went back to live in her father's home.

¹²Some years later Judah's wife died. After the time of mourning was over, Judah and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah to supervise the shearing of his sheep. ¹³Someone told Tamar, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

¹⁴Tamar was aware that Shelah had grown up, but no arrangements had been made for her to come and marry him. So she changed out of her widow's clothing and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Then she sat beside the road at the entrance to the village of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. ¹⁵Judah noticed her and thought she was a prostitute, since she had covered her face. ¹⁶So he stopped and propositioned her. "Let me have sex with you," he said, not realizing that she was his own daughter-in-law.

"How much will you pay to have sex with me?" Tamar asked.

¹⁷"I'll send you a young goat from my flock," Judah promised.

"But what will you give me to guarantee that you will send the goat?" she asked.

¹⁸"What kind of guarantee do you want?" he replied.

She answered, "Leave me your identification seal and its cord and the walking stick you are carrying." So Judah gave them to her. Then he had intercourse with her, and she became pregnant. ¹⁹Afterward she went back home, took off her veil, and put on her widow's clothing as usual.

²⁰Later Judah asked his friend Hirah the Adullamite to take the young goat to the woman and to pick up the things he had given her as his guarantee. But Hirah couldn't find her. ²¹So he asked the men who lived there, "Where can I find the shrine prostitute who was sitting beside the road at the entrance to Enaim?"

"We've never had a shrine prostitute here," they replied.

²²So Hirah returned to Judah and told him, "I couldn't find her anywhere, and the men of the village claim they've never had a shrine prostitute there."

²³"Then let her keep the things I gave her," Judah said. "I sent the young goat as we agreed, but you couldn't find her. We'd be the laughingstock of the village if we went back again to look for her."

²⁴About three months later, Judah was told, "Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has acted like a prostitute. And now, because of this, she's pregnant."

"Bring her out, and let her be burned!" Judah demanded.

37:35 Hebrew *go down to Sheol*. 37:36 Hebrew *the Medianites*. The relationship between the Midianites and Medianites is unclear; compare 37:28. See also 25:2.

²⁵But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: “The man who owns these things made me pregnant. Look closely. Whose seal and cord and walking stick are these?”

²⁶Judah recognized them immediately and said, “She is more righteous than I am, because I didn’t arrange for her to marry my son Shelah.” And Judah never slept with Tamar again.

²⁷When the time came for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was carrying twins. ²⁸While she was in labor, one of the babies reached out his hand. The midwife grabbed it and tied a scarlet string around the child’s wrist, announcing, “This one came out first.” ²⁹But then he pulled back his hand, and out came his brother! “What!” the midwife exclaimed. “How did you break out first?” So he was named Perez.* ³⁰Then the baby with the scarlet string on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.*

CHAPTER 39

Joseph in Potiphar’s House

When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

²The LORD was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. ³Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. ⁴This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. ⁵From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master’s household and property, the LORD began to bless Potiphar’s household for Joseph’s sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. ⁶So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn’t worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, ⁷and Potiphar’s wife soon began to look at him lustfully. “Come and sleep with me,” she demanded.

⁸But Joseph refused. “Look,” he told her, “my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. ⁹No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God.”

¹⁰She kept putting pressure on Joseph day

38:29 Perez means “breaking out.” 38:30 Zerah means “scarlet” or “brightness.”



first steps

REMEMBER THAT OTHERS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY DEALT WITH TEMPTATION

Read GENESIS 39:1-23

This story identifies one of the most common temptations known to man: sexual sin. Yet Joseph passed this test with flying colors. His example gives us three practical ways to deal with this temptation so that we, like Joseph, can stand tall in the end.

1. Joseph Recognized That This Would Be a Sin against God. This should be the basis for our fight against temptation. Notice that Scripture doesn’t say he was solely afraid of what her husband, Potiphar, would think, or even worried that he might get caught. He realized that he would be sinning against God (verse 9). Since Joseph loved the Lord, that thought alone served as a deterrent against the temptation.

2. Joseph Attempted to Steer Clear of Temptation. Verse 6 says that Joseph was a handsome young man. For that reason, all this attention from Potiphar’s wife could have been quite an ego boost. But he deliberately chose not to expose himself to this prideful temptation (verse 10). As Joseph’s actions illustrate, sometimes the best defense against temptation is to keep clear of it in the first place.

3. Joseph Fled. Even though he was able to keep away from Potiphar’s wife for a while, there came a time when he was forced to face her. But, as 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, God will always provide a way out of a potentially sinful situation. In this case, Joseph’s only way out was to physically flee the scene (verse 12). Likewise, sometimes we may have to take drastic actions to avoid succumbing to the temptations Satan places in our path.

Refusing to give in to a certain temptation may seem extremely difficult. But in the end, you will find that your walk with the Lord will grow deeper if you remain faithful through difficult situations.

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A40.

after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. ¹¹One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. ¹²She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house.

¹³When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled, ¹⁴she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running. "Look!" she said. "My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I screamed. ¹⁵When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got away, but he left his cloak behind with me."

¹⁶She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. ¹⁷Then she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me," she said. ¹⁸"But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!"

Joseph Put in Prison

¹⁹Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. ²⁰So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. ²¹But the LORD was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the LORD made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. ²²Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. ²³The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The LORD was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

CHAPTER 40

Joseph Interprets Two Dreams

Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. ²Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, ³and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. ⁴They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.

⁵While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. ⁶When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. ⁷"Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.

⁸And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

⁹So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. ¹⁰The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. ¹¹I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

¹²"This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. ¹³Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer. ¹⁴And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. ¹⁵For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."

¹⁶When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. ¹⁷The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head."

¹⁸"This is what the dream means," Joseph told him. "The three baskets also represent three days. ¹⁹Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh."

²⁰Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned* his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. ²¹He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. ²²But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. ²³Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

CHAPTER 41

Pharaoh's Dreams

Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. ²In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. ³Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. ⁴Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

⁵But he fell asleep again and had a second

dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. ⁶Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. ⁷And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

⁸The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

⁹Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh. ¹⁰"Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. ¹¹One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. ¹²There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. ¹³And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."

¹⁴Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. ¹⁵Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it."

¹⁶"It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."

¹⁷So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, ¹⁸and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. ¹⁹But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. ²¹But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

²²"Then I fell asleep again, and I had another dream. This time I saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. ²³Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. ²⁴And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."

²⁵Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. ²⁶The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. ²⁷The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

²⁸"This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. ²⁹The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. ³⁰But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. ³¹This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. ³²As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

³³"Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. ³⁴Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. ³⁵Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. ³⁶That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land."

Joseph Made Ruler of Egypt

³⁷Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. ³⁸So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" ³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. ⁴⁰You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

⁴¹Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." ⁴²Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. ⁴⁴And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one

will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval.”

⁴⁵Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah.* He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On.* So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. ⁴⁶He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh’s presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt.

⁴⁷As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. ⁴⁸During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. ⁴⁹He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure.

⁵⁰During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. ⁵¹Joseph named his older son Manasseh,* for he said, “God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father’s family.” ⁵²Joseph named his second son Ephraim,* for he said, “God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief.”

⁵³At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. ⁵⁴Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. ⁵⁵Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, “Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you.” ⁵⁶So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

CHAPTER 42

Joseph’s Brothers Go to Egypt

When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why are you standing around looking at one another? ²I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we’ll die.”

³So Joseph’s ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. ⁴But Jacob wouldn’t let

Joseph’s younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him. ⁵So Jacob’s* sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well.

⁶Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where are you from?” he demanded.

“From the land of Canaan,” they replied. “We have come to buy food.”

⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn’t recognize him. ⁹And he remembered the dreams he’d had about them many years before. He said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.”

¹⁰“No, my lord!” they exclaimed. “Your servants have simply come to buy food. ¹¹We are all brothers—members of the same family. We are honest men, sir! We are not spies!”

¹²“Yes, you are!” Joseph insisted. “You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.”

¹³“Sir,” they said, “there are actually twelve of us. We, your servants, are all brothers, sons of a man living in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is back there with our father right now, and one of our brothers is no longer with us.”

¹⁴But Joseph insisted, “As I said, you are spies! ¹⁵This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will never leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶One of you must go and get your brother. I’ll keep the rest of you here in prison. Then we’ll find out whether or not your story is true. By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don’t have a younger brother, then I’ll know you are spies.”

¹⁷So Joseph put them all in prison for three days. ¹⁸On the third day Joseph said to them, “I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. ¹⁹If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. ²⁰But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die.” To this they agreed.

²¹Speaking among themselves, they said, “Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish

41:45a *Zaphenath-paneah* probably means “God speaks and lives.” 41:45b Greek version reads of *Heliopolis*; also in 41:50. 41:51 *Manasseh* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “causing to forget.” 41:52 *Ephraim* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “fruitful.” 42:5 Hebrew *Israel’s*. See note on 35:21.

when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn't listen. That's why we're in this trouble."

²²"Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?" Reuben asked. "But you wouldn't listen. And now we have to answer for his blood!"

²³Of course, they didn't know that Joseph understood them, for he had been speaking to them through an interpreter. ²⁴Now he turned away from them and began to weep. When he regained his composure, he spoke to them again. Then he chose Simeon from among them and had him tied up right before their eyes.

²⁵Joseph then ordered his servants to fill the men's sacks with grain, but he also gave secret instructions to return each brother's payment at the top of his sack. He also gave them supplies for their journey home. ²⁶So the brothers loaded their donkeys with the grain and headed for home.

²⁷But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, he found his money in the top of his sack. ²⁸"Look!" he exclaimed to his brothers. "My money has been returned; it's here in my sack!" Then their hearts sank. Trembling, they said to each other, "What has God done to us?"

²⁹When the brothers came to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened to them. ³⁰"The man who is governor of the land spoke very harshly to us," they told him. "He accused us of being spies scouting the land. ³¹But we said, 'We are honest men, not spies. ³²We are twelve brothers, sons of one father. One brother is no longer with us, and the youngest is at home with our father in the land of Canaan.'

³³"Then the man who is governor of the land told us, 'This is how I will find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take grain for your starving families and go on home. ³⁴But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. Then I will know you are honest men and not spies. Then I will give you back your brother, and you may trade freely in the land.'"

³⁵As they emptied out their sacks, there in each man's sack was the bag of money he had paid for the grain! The brothers and their father were terrified when they saw the bags of money. ³⁶Jacob exclaimed, "You are robbing me of my children! Joseph is gone! Simeon is gone! And now you want to take Benjamin, too. Everything is going against me!"

³⁷Then Reuben said to his father, "You may kill my two sons if I don't bring Benjamin back to you. I'll be responsible for him, and I promise to bring him back."

³⁸But Jacob replied, "My son will not go down with you. His brother Joseph is dead, and he is all I have left. If anything should happen to him on your journey, you would send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.*"

CHAPTER 43

The Brothers Return to Egypt

But the famine continued to ravage the land of Canaan. ²When the grain they had brought from Egypt was almost gone, Jacob said to his sons, "Go back and buy us a little more food."

³But Judah said, "The man was serious when he warned us, 'You won't see my face again unless your brother is with you.' ⁴If you send Benjamin with us, we will go down and buy more food. ⁵But if you don't let Benjamin go, we won't go either. Remember, the man said, 'You won't see my face again unless your brother is with you.'"

⁶"Why were you so cruel to me?" Jacob* moaned. "Why did you tell him you had another brother?"

⁷"The man kept asking us questions about our family," they replied. "He asked, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' So we answered his questions. How could we know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here?'"

⁸Judah said to his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will be on our way. Otherwise we will all die of starvation—and not only we, but you and our little ones. ⁹I personally guarantee his safety. You may hold me responsible if I don't bring him back to you. Then let me bear the blame forever. ¹⁰If we hadn't wasted all this time, we could have gone and returned twice by now."

¹¹So their father, Jacob, finally said to them, "If it can't be avoided, then at least do this. Pack your bags with the best products of this land. Take them down to the man as gifts—balm, honey, gum, aromatic resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds. ¹²Also take double the money that was put back in your sacks, as it was probably someone's mistake. ¹³Then take your brother, and go back to the man. ¹⁴May God Almighty* give you mercy as you go before the man, so that he will release Simeon and let Benjamin return. But if I must lose my children, so be it."

¹⁵So the men packed Jacob's gifts and double the money and headed off with Benjamin. They finally arrived in Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. ¹⁶When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the manager of his household, "These men will eat with me this noon. Take them inside the palace. Then go

slaughter an animal, and prepare a big feast.”
¹⁷So the man did as Joseph told him and took them into Joseph’s palace.

¹⁸The brothers were terrified when they saw that they were being taken into Joseph’s house. “It’s because of the money someone put in our sacks last time we were here,” they said. “He plans to pretend that we stole it. Then he will seize us, make us slaves, and take our donkeys.”

A Feast at Joseph’s Palace

¹⁹The brothers approached the manager of Joseph’s household and spoke to him at the entrance to the palace. ²⁰“Sir,” they said, “we came to Egypt once before to buy food. ²¹But as we were returning home, we stopped for the night and opened our sacks. Then we discovered that each man’s money—the exact amount paid—was in the top of his sack! Here it is; we have brought it back with us. ²²We also have additional money to buy more food. We have no idea who put our money in our sacks.”

²³“Relax. Don’t be afraid,” the household manager told them. “Your God, the God of your father, must have put this treasure into your sacks. I know I received your payment.” Then he released Simeon and brought him out to them.

²⁴The manager then led the men into Joseph’s palace. He gave them water to wash their feet and provided food for their donkeys. ²⁵They were told they would be eating there, so they prepared their gifts for Joseph’s arrival at noon.

²⁶When Joseph came home, they gave him the gifts they had brought him, then bowed low to the ground before him. ²⁷After greeting them, he asked, “How is your father, the old man you spoke about? Is he still alive?”

²⁸“Yes,” they replied. “Our father, your servant, is alive and well.” And they bowed low again.

²⁹Then Joseph looked at his brother Benjamin, the son of his own mother. “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” Joseph asked. “May God be gracious to you, my son.”³⁰ Then Joseph hurried from the room because he was overcome with emotion for his brother. He went into his private room, where he broke down and wept. ³¹After washing his face, he came back out, keeping himself under control. Then he ordered, “Bring out the food!”

³²The waiters served Joseph at his own table, and his brothers were served at a separate table. The Egyptians who ate with Joseph sat at their own table, because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them. ³³Joseph

told each of his brothers where to sit, and to their amazement, he seated them according to age, from oldest to youngest. ³⁴And Joseph filled their plates with food from his own table, giving Benjamin five times as much as he gave the others. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

CHAPTER 44

Joseph’s Silver Cup

When his brothers were ready to leave, Joseph gave these instructions to his palace manager: “Fill each of their sacks with as much grain as they can carry, and put each man’s money back into his sack. ²Then put my personal silver cup at the top of the youngest brother’s sack, along with the money for his grain.” So the manager did as Joseph instructed him.

³The brothers were up at dawn and were sent on their journey with their loaded donkeys. ⁴But when they had gone only a short distance and were barely out of the city, Joseph said to his palace manager, “Chase after them and stop them. When you catch up with them, ask them, ‘Why have you repaid my kindness with such evil?’ ⁵Why have you stolen my master’s silver cup,* which he uses to predict the future? What a wicked thing you have done!”

⁶When the palace manager caught up with the men, he spoke to them as he had been instructed.

⁷“What are you talking about?” the brothers responded. “We are your servants and would never do such a thing! ⁸Didn’t we return the money we found in our sacks? We brought it back all the way from the land of Canaan. Why would we steal silver or gold from your master’s house? ⁹If you find his cup with any one of us, let that man die. And all the rest of us, my lord, will be your slaves.”

¹⁰“That’s fair,” the man replied. “But only the one who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go free.”

¹¹They all quickly took their sacks from the backs of their donkeys and opened them. ¹²The palace manager searched the brothers’ sacks, from the oldest to the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack! ¹³When the brothers saw this, they tore their clothing in despair. Then they loaded their donkeys again and returned to the city.

¹⁴Joseph was still in his palace when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him. ¹⁵“What have you done?” Joseph demanded. “Don’t you know that a man like me can predict the future?”

44:5 As in Greek version; Hebrew lacks this phrase.

¹⁶Judah answered, “Oh, my lord, what can we say to you? How can we explain this? How can we prove our innocence? God is punishing us for our sins. My lord, we have all returned to be your slaves—all of us, not just our brother who had your cup in his sack.”

¹⁷“No,” Joseph said. “I would never do such a thing! Only the man who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go back to your father in peace.”

Judah Speaks for His Brothers

¹⁸Then Judah stepped forward and said, “Please, my lord, let your servant say just one word to you. Please, do not be angry with me, even though you are as powerful as Pharaoh himself.

¹⁹“My lord, previously you asked us, your servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’²⁰And we responded, ‘Yes, my lord, we have a father who is an old man, and his youngest son is a child of his old age. His full brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him very much.’

²¹“And you said to us, ‘Bring him here so I can see him with my own eyes.’²²But we said to you, ‘My lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for his father would die.’²³But you told us, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes with you, you will never see my face again.’

²⁴“So we returned to your servant, our father, and told him what you had said.²⁵Later, when he said, ‘Go back again and buy us more food,’²⁶we replied, ‘We can’t go unless you let our youngest brother go with us. We’ll never get to see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’

²⁷“Then my father said to us, ‘As you know, my wife had two sons,²⁸ and one of them went away and never returned. Doubtless he was torn to pieces by some wild animal. I have never seen him since.²⁹Now if you take his brother away from me, and any harm comes to him, you will send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.*’

³⁰“And now, my lord, I cannot go back to my father without the boy. Our father’s life is bound up in the boy’s life.³¹If he sees that the boy is not with us, our father will die. We, your servants, will indeed be responsible for sending that grieving, white-haired man to his grave.³²My lord, I guaranteed to my father that I would take care of the boy. I told him, ‘If I don’t bring him back to you, I will bear the blame forever.’

³³“So please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return

with his brothers.³⁴For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I couldn’t bear to see the anguish this would cause my father!”

CHAPTER 45

Joseph Reveals His Identity

Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, “Out, all of you!” So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was.²Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace.

³“I am Joseph!” he said to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them.⁴“Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt.⁵But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives.⁶This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.⁷God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.*⁸So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser* to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

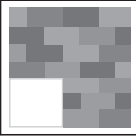
⁹“Now hurry back to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately!’¹⁰You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own.¹¹I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.”

¹²Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph!¹³Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly.”¹⁴Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same.¹⁵Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

Pharaoh Invites Jacob to Egypt

¹⁶The news soon reached Pharaoh’s palace: “Joseph’s brothers have arrived!” Pharaoh and his officials were all delighted to hear this.

44:29 Hebrew to Sheol; also in 44:31. 45:7 Or and to save you with an extraordinary rescue. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 45:8 Hebrew a father.


cornerstones
FORGIVENESS BREAKS DOWN WALLS
Read GENESIS 45:1-15

Joseph stands out in Scripture as one of the most amazing examples of a man who extended incredible forgiveness. If anyone could have held

a grudge, it certainly would have been him. Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers because they were jealous of the attention their father, Jacob, heaped upon him. Through an amazing chain of events, God made Joseph the second most powerful person in Egypt.

In his position, Joseph could have justifiably avenged himself. Instead, he offered them forgiveness, saying, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people” (Genesis 50:20). By choosing to forgive his brothers, Joseph refused to become a prisoner of bitterness.

When you choose not to forgive those who hurt you, you enslave yourself to the destructive attitudes of bitterness and resentment. These attitudes then begin to eat at your insides, day in and day out, to the point that when you see that person or even hear his or her name, you become angry. This is not what God intends for you.

God commanded us to forgive. He did this not just so we would show his mercy and grace to others, but to free us from the prison of bitterness. Don’t allow yourself to be held captive by an unforgiving heart. Remember, when you forgive someone, you set a prisoner free—yourself.

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A30.

¹⁷Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘This is what you must do: Load your pack animals, and hurry back to the land of Canaan. ¹⁸Then get your father and all of your families, and return here to me. I will give you the very best land in Egypt, and you will eat from the best that the land produces.’”

¹⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘Take wagons from the land of Egypt to carry your little children and your wives, and bring your father here. ²⁰Don’t worry about your personal belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”

²¹So the sons of Jacob* did as they were told. Joseph provided them with wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he gave them supplies for the journey. ²²And he gave each of them new clothes—but to Benjamin he gave five changes of clothes and 300 pieces* of silver. ²³He also sent his father ten male donkeys loaded with the finest products of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other supplies he would need on his journey.

²⁴So Joseph sent his brothers off, and as they left, he called after them, “Don’t quarrel about all this along the way!” ²⁵And they left Egypt and returned to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan.

²⁶“Joseph is still alive!” they told him. “And he is governor of all the land of Egypt!” Jacob

was stunned at the news—he couldn’t believe it. ²⁷But when they repeated to Jacob everything Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, their father’s spirits revived.

²⁸Then Jacob exclaimed, “It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I must go and see him before I die.”

CHAPTER 46

Jacob’s Journey to Egypt

So Jacob* set out for Egypt with all his possessions. And when he came to Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac.

²During the night God spoke to him in a vision. “Jacob! Jacob!” he called.

“Here I am,” Jacob replied.

³“I am God,* the God of your father,” the voice said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make your family into a great nation.

⁴I will go with you down to Egypt, and I will bring you back again. You will die in Egypt, but Joseph will be with you to close your eyes.”

⁵So Jacob left Beersheba, and his sons took him to Egypt. They carried him and their little ones and their wives in the wagons Pharaoh had provided for them. ⁶They also took all their livestock and all the personal belongings they had acquired in the land of Canaan. So Jacob and his entire family went to Egypt—

45:21 Hebrew *Israel*; also in 45:28. See note on 35:21. 45:22 Hebrew *300 shekels*, about 7.5 pounds or 3.4 kilograms in weight. 46:1 Hebrew *Israel*; also in 46:29, 30. See note on 35:21. 46:3 Hebrew *I am El*.

7 sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters—all his descendants.

⁸These are the names of the descendants of Israel—the sons of Jacob—who went to Egypt:

Reuben was Jacob's oldest son. ⁹The sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

¹⁰The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul. (Shaul's mother was a Canaanite woman.)

¹¹The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹²The sons of Judah were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (though Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

¹³The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puah,* Jashub,* and Shimron.

¹⁴The sons of Zebulun were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

¹⁵These were the sons of Leah and Jacob who were born in Paddan-aram, in addition to their daughter, Dinah. The number of Jacob's descendants (male and female) through Leah was thirty-three.

¹⁶The sons of Gad were Zephon,* Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

¹⁷The sons of Asher were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. Their sister was Serah. Beriah's sons were Heber and Malkiel.

¹⁸These were the sons of Zilpah, the servant given to Leah by her father, Laban. The number of Jacob's descendants through Zilpah was sixteen.

¹⁹The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁰Joseph's sons, born in the land of Egypt, were Manasseh and Ephraim. Their mother was Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On.*

²¹Benjamin's sons were Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

²²These were the sons of Rachel and Jacob. The number of Jacob's descendants through Rachel was fourteen.

²³The son of Dan was Hushim.

²⁴The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

²⁵These were the sons of Bilhah, the servant given to Rachel by her father, Laban. The number of Jacob's descendants through Bilhah was seven.

²⁶The total number of Jacob's direct descendants who went with him to Egypt, not counting his sons' wives, was sixty-six. ²⁷In addition, Joseph had two sons* who were born in Egypt. So altogether, there were seventy* members of Jacob's family in the land of Egypt.

Jacob's Family Arrives in Goshen

²⁸As they neared their destination, Jacob sent Judah ahead to meet Joseph and get directions to the region of Goshen. And when they finally arrived there, ²⁹Joseph prepared his chariot and traveled to Goshen to meet his father, Jacob. When Joseph arrived, he embraced his father and wept, holding him for a long time. ³⁰Finally, Jacob said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen your face again and know you are still alive."

³¹And Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's entire family, "I will go to Pharaoh and tell him, 'My brothers and my father's entire family have come to me from the land of Canaan.

³²These men are shepherds, and they raise livestock. They have brought with them their flocks and herds and everything they own.'"

³³Then he said, "When Pharaoh calls for you and asks you about your occupation, ³⁴you must tell him, 'We, your servants, have raised livestock all our lives, as our ancestors have always done.' When you tell him this, he will let you live here in the region of Goshen, for the Egyptians despise shepherds."

CHAPTER 47

Jacob Blesses Pharaoh

Then Joseph went to see Pharaoh and told him, "My father and my brothers have arrived from the land of Canaan. They have come with all their flocks and herds and possessions, and they are now in the region of Goshen."

²Joseph took five of his brothers with him and presented them to Pharaoh. ³And Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?"

They replied, "We, your servants, are shepherds, just like our ancestors. ⁴We have come to live here in Egypt for a while, for there is no pasture for our flocks in Canaan. The famine is very severe there. So please, we request permission to live in the region of Goshen."

⁵Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Now that your father and brothers have joined you here, ⁶choose any place in the entire land of Egypt for them to live. Give them the best land of Egypt. Let them live in the region of Goshen.

46:13a As in Syriac version and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also 1 Chr 7:1); Hebrew reads *Puah*. 46:13b As in some Greek manuscripts and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Num 26:24; 1 Chr 7:1); Hebrew reads *Iob*. 46:16 As in Greek version and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Num 26:15); Hebrew reads *Ziphion*. 46:20 Greek version reads of *Heliopolis*. 46:27a Greek version reads *nine sons*, probably including Joseph's grandsons through Ephraim and Manasseh (see 1 Chr 7:14-20). 46:27b Greek version reads *seventy-five*; see note on Exod 1:5.

And if any of them have special skills, put them in charge of my livestock, too.”

⁷Then Joseph brought in his father, Jacob, and presented him to Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

⁸“How old are you?” Pharaoh asked him.

⁹Jacob replied, “I have traveled this earth for 130 hard years. But my life has been short compared to the lives of my ancestors.” ¹⁰Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh again before leaving his court.

¹¹So Joseph assigned the best land of Egypt—the region of Rameses—to his father and his brothers, and he settled them there, just as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹²And Joseph provided food for his father and his brothers in amounts appropriate to the number of their dependents, including the smallest children.

Joseph's Leadership in the Famine

¹³Meanwhile, the famine became so severe that all the food was used up, and people were starving throughout the lands of Egypt and Canaan.

¹⁴By selling grain to the people, Joseph eventually collected all the money in Egypt and Canaan, and he put the money in Pharaoh's treasury. ¹⁵When the people of Egypt and Canaan ran out of money, all the Egyptians came to Joseph. “Our money is gone!” they cried. “But please give us food, or we will die before your very eyes!”

¹⁶Joseph replied, “Since your money is gone, bring me your livestock. I will give you food in exchange for your livestock.” ¹⁷So they brought their livestock to Joseph in exchange for food. In exchange for their horses, flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and donkeys, Joseph provided them with food for another year.

¹⁸But that year ended, and the next year they came again and said, “We cannot hide the truth from you, my lord. Our money is gone, and all our livestock and cattle are yours. We have nothing left to give but our bodies and our land. ¹⁹Why should we die before your very eyes? Buy us and our land in exchange for food; we offer our land and ourselves as slaves for Pharaoh. Just give us grain so we may live and not die, and so the land does not become empty and desolate.”

²⁰So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold him their fields because the famine was so severe, and soon all the land belonged to Pharaoh. ²¹As for the people, he made them all slaves,* from one end of Egypt to the other. ²²The only land he did not buy was the land belonging to the

priests. They received an allotment of food directly from Pharaoh, so they didn't need to sell their land.

²³Then Joseph said to the people, “Look, today I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh. I will provide you with seed so you can plant the fields. ²⁴Then when you harvest it, one-fifth of your crop will belong to Pharaoh. You may keep the remaining four-fifths as seed for your fields and as food for you, your households, and your little ones.”

²⁵“You have saved our lives!” they exclaimed. “May it please you, my lord, to let us be Pharaoh's servants.” ²⁶Joseph then issued a decree still in effect in the land of Egypt, that Pharaoh should receive one-fifth of all the crops grown on his land. Only the land belonging to the priests was not given to Pharaoh.

²⁷Meanwhile, the people of Israel settled in the region of Goshen in Egypt. There they acquired property, and they were fruitful, and their population grew rapidly. ²⁸Jacob lived for seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, so he lived 147 years in all.

²⁹As the time of his death drew near, Jacob* called for his son Joseph and said to him, “Please do me this favor. Put your hand under my thigh and swear that you will treat me with unfailing love by honoring this last request: Do not bury me in Egypt. ³⁰When I die, please take my body out of Egypt and bury me with my ancestors.”

So Joseph promised, “I will do as you ask.”

³¹“Swear that you will do it,” Jacob insisted. So Joseph gave his oath, and Jacob bowed humbly at the head of his bed.*

CHAPTER 48

Jacob Blesses Manasseh and Ephraim

One day not long after this, word came to Joseph, “Your father is failing rapidly.” So Joseph went to visit his father, and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

²When Joseph arrived, Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to see you.” So Jacob* gathered his strength and sat up in his bed.

³Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty* appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. ⁴He said to me, ‘I will make you fruitful, and I will multiply your descendants. I will make you a multitude of nations. And I will give this land of Canaan to your descendants* after you as an everlasting possession.’

⁵“Now I am claiming as my own sons these two boys of yours, Ephraim and Manasseh, who

47:21 As in Greek version and Samaritan Pentateuch; Hebrew reads *he moved them all into the towns*. 47:29 Hebrew *Israel*; also in 47:31b. See note on 35:21. 47:31 Greek version reads *and Israel bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff*. Compare Heb 11:21. 48:2 Hebrew *Israel*; also in 48:8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 21. See note on 35:21. 48:3 Hebrew *El-Shaddai*. 48:4 Hebrew *seed*; also in 48:19.

were born here in the land of Egypt before I arrived. They will be my sons, just as Reuben and Simeon are. ⁶But any children born to you in the future will be your own, and they will inherit land within the territories of their brothers Ephraim and Manasseh.

⁷“Long ago, as I was returning from Paddan-aram, Rachel died in the land of Canaan. We were still on the way, some distance from Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). So with great sorrow I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath.”

⁸Then Jacob looked over at the two boys. “Are these your sons?” he asked.

⁹“Yes,” Joseph told him, “these are the sons God has given me here in Egypt.”

And Jacob said, “Bring them closer to me, so I can bless them.”

¹⁰Jacob was half blind because of his age and could hardly see. So Joseph brought the boys close to him, and Jacob kissed and embraced them. ¹¹Then Jacob said to Joseph, “I never thought I would see your face again, but now God has let me see your children, too!”

¹²Joseph moved the boys, who were at their grandfather’s knees, and he bowed with his face to the ground. ¹³Then he positioned the boys in front of Jacob. With his right hand he directed Ephraim toward Jacob’s left hand, and with his left hand he put Manasseh at Jacob’s right hand. ¹⁴But Jacob crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys’ heads. He put his right hand on the head of Ephraim, though he was the younger boy, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, though he was the firstborn.

¹⁵Then he blessed Joseph and said,

“May the God before whom my grandfather Abraham
and my father, Isaac, walked—
the God who has been my shepherd
all my life, to this very day,

¹⁶ the Angel who has redeemed me from
all harm—
may he bless these boys.

May they preserve my name
and the names of Abraham and Isaac.

And may their descendants multiply greatly
throughout the earth.”

¹⁷But Joseph was upset when he saw that his father placed his right hand on Ephraim’s head. So Joseph lifted it to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. ¹⁸“No, my father,” he said. “This one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head.”

¹⁹But his father refused. “I know, my son; I know,” he replied. “Manasseh will also become a great people, but his younger brother will be-

come even greater. And his descendants will become a multitude of nations.”

²⁰So Jacob blessed the boys that day with this blessing: “The people of Israel will use your names when they give a blessing. They will say, ‘May God make you as prosperous as Ephraim and Manasseh.’” In this way, Jacob put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

²¹Then Jacob said to Joseph, “Look, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will take you back to Canaan, the land of your ancestors. ²²And beyond what I have given your brothers, I am giving you an extra portion of the land* that I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow.”

CHAPTER 49

Jacob’s Last Words to His Sons

Then Jacob called together all his sons and said, “Gather around me, and I will tell you what will happen to each of you in the days to come.

² “Come and listen, you sons of Jacob;
listen to Israel, your father.

³ “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength,
the child of my vigorous youth.
You are first in rank and first in power.

⁴ But you are as unruly as a flood,
and you will be first no longer.
For you went to bed with my wife;
you defiled my marriage couch.

⁵ “Simeon and Levi are two of a kind;
their weapons are instruments of
violence.

⁶ May I never join in their meetings;
may I never be a party to their plans.
For in their anger they murdered men,
and they crippled oxen just for sport.

⁷ A curse on their anger, for it is fierce;
a curse on their wrath, for it is cruel.
I will scatter them among the descendants
of Jacob;
I will disperse them throughout Israel.

⁸ “Judah, your brothers will praise you.
You will grasp your enemies by the neck.
All your relatives will bow before you.

⁹ Judah, my son, is a young lion
that has finished eating its prey.
Like a lion he crouches and lies down;
like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?

¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler’s staff from his
descendants,*
until the coming of the one to whom
it belongs,*
the one whom all nations will honor.

48:22 Or an extra ridge of land. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 49:10a Hebrew from between his feet. 49:10b Or until tribute is brought to him and the peoples obey; traditionally rendered until Shiloh comes.

- 11 He ties his foal to a grapevine,
the colt of his donkey to a choice vine.
He washes his clothes in wine,
his robes in the blood of grapes.
- 12 His eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth are whiter than milk.
- 13 "Zebulun will settle by the seashore
and will be a harbor for ships;
his borders will extend to Sidon.
- 14 "Issachar is a sturdy donkey,
resting between two saddlepacks.*
- 15 When he sees how good the countryside
is and how pleasant the land,
he will bend his shoulder to the load
and submit himself to hard labor.
- 16 "Dan will govern his people,
like any other tribe in Israel.
- 17 Dan will be a snake beside the road,
a poisonous viper along the path
that bites the horse's hooves
so its rider is thrown off.
- 18 I trust in you for salvation, O LORD!
- 19 "Gad will be attacked by marauding
bands,
but he will attack them when they
retreat.
- 20 "Asher will dine on rich foods
and produce food fit for kings.
- 21 "Naphtali is a doe set free
that bears beautiful fawns.
- 22 "Joseph is the foal of a wild donkey,
the foal of a wild donkey at a spring—
one of the wild donkeys on the ridge.*
- 23 Archers attacked him savagely;
they shot at him and harassed him.
- 24 But his bow remained taut,
and his arms were strengthened
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,
by the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.
- 25 May the God of your father help you;
may the Almighty bless you
with the blessings of the heavens above,
and blessings of the watery depths
below,
and blessings of the breasts and womb.
- 26 May the blessings of your father
surpass the blessings of the ancient
mountains,*
reaching to the heights of the eternal
hills.
May these blessings rest on the head
of Joseph,
who is a prince among his brothers.

- 27 "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf,
devouring his enemies in the morning
and dividing his plunder in the evening."

²⁸These are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said as he told his sons good-bye. He blessed each one with an appropriate message.

Jacob's Death and Burial

²⁹Then Jacob instructed them, "Soon I will die and join my ancestors. Bury me with my father and grandfather in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. ³⁰This is the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a permanent burial site. ³¹There Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried. There Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, are buried. And there I buried Leah. ³²It is the plot of land and the cave that my grandfather Abraham bought from the Hittites."

³³When Jacob had finished this charge to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and joined his ancestors in death.

CHAPTER 50

Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. ²Then Joseph told the physicians who served him to embalm his father's body; so Jacob* was embalmed. ³The embalming process took the usual forty days. And the Egyptians mourned his death for seventy days.

⁴When the period of mourning was over, Joseph approached Pharaoh's advisers and said, "Please do me this favor and speak to Pharaoh on my behalf. ⁵Tell him that my father made me swear an oath. He said to me, 'Listen, I am about to die. Take my body back to the land of Canaan, and bury me in the tomb I prepared for myself.' So please allow me to go and bury my father. After his burial, I will return without delay."

⁶Pharaoh agreed to Joseph's request. "Go and bury your father, as he made you promise," he said. ⁷So Joseph went up to bury his father. He was accompanied by all of Pharaoh's officials, all the senior members of Pharaoh's household, and all the senior officers of Egypt. ⁸Joseph also took his entire household and his brothers and their households. But they left their little children and flocks and herds in the land of Goshen. ⁹A great number of chariots and charioteers accompanied Joseph.

¹⁰When they arrived at the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan River, they held a very great and solemn memorial service, with a seven-day period of mourning for Joseph's fa-

49:14 Or *sheepfolds*, or *hearth*s. 49:22 Or *Joseph is a fruitful tree, / a fruitful tree beside a spring, / His branches reach over the wall*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 49:26 Or *of my ancestors*. 50:2 Hebrew *Israel*. See note on 35:21.

ther. ¹¹The local residents, the Canaanites, watched them mourning at the threshing floor of Atad. Then they renamed that place (which is near the Jordan) Abel-mizraim,* for they said, "This is a place of deep mourning for these Egyptians."

¹²So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them. ¹³They carried his body to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre. This is the cave that Abraham had bought as a permanent burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers

¹⁴After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. ¹⁵But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said.

¹⁶So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us ¹⁷to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin." When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. ¹⁸Then his brothers

came and threw themselves down before Joseph. "Look, we are your slaves!" they said.

¹⁹But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? ²⁰You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. ²¹No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

The Death of Joseph

²²So Joseph and his brothers and their families continued to live in Egypt. Joseph lived to the age of 110. ²³He lived to see three generations of descendants of his son Ephraim, and he lived to see the birth of the children of Manasseh's son Makir, whom he claimed as his own.*

²⁴"Soon I will die," Joseph told his brothers, "but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

²⁵Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, "When God comes to help you and lead you back, you must take my bones with you." ²⁶So Joseph died at the age of 110. The Egyptians embalmed him, and his body was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

50:11 *Abel-mizraim* means "mourning of the Egyptians." 50:23 Hebrew *who were born on Joseph's knees*.

Psalms

AUTHOR: DAVID, ASAPH, SOLOMON, ET. AL. | DATE WRITTEN: 1440–586 B.C. | GENRE: POETRY

***Psalms contains a variety of themes that touch on every area of life.** The central theme, however, is the praise and worship of a sovereign and loving God. Besides being a source of comfort and worship, the Psalms are filled with prophecies about Jesus Christ.*

BOOK ONE (Psalms 1–41)

PSALM 1

- ¹ Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
- ² But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.
- ³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.
- ⁴ But not the wicked! They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.
- ⁵ They will be condemned at the time of judgment. Sinners will have no place among the godly.
- ⁶ For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

PSALM 2

- ¹ Why are the nations so angry? Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
- ² The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the LORD and against his anointed one.
- ³ “Let us break their chains,” they cry, “and free ourselves from slavery to God.”

- ⁴ But the one who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.
- ⁵ Then in anger he rebukes them, terrifying them with his fierce fury.
- ⁶ For the Lord declares, “I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem,* on my holy mountain.”
- ⁷ The king proclaims the LORD’s decree: “The LORD said to me, ‘You are my son.* Today I have become your Father.*’
- ⁸ Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession.
- ⁹ You will break* them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.”
- ¹⁰ Now then, you kings, act wisely! Be warned, you rulers of the earth!
- ¹¹ Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling.
- ¹² Submit to God’s royal son,* or he will become angry, and you will be destroyed in the midst of all your activities— for his anger flares up in an instant. But what joy for all who take refuge in him!

PSALM 3

A psalm of David, regarding the time David fled from his son Absalom.

- ¹ O LORD, I have so many enemies; so many are against me.
- ² So many are saying, “God will never rescue him!”

*Interlude**

2:6 Hebrew *on Zion*. 2:7a Or *Son*; also in 2:12. 2:7b Or *Today I reveal you as my son*. 2:9 Greek version reads *rule*. Compare Rev 2:27. 2:12 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 3:2 Hebrew *Selah*. The meaning of this word is uncertain, though it is probably a musical or literary term. It is rendered *Interlude* throughout the Psalms.

³ But you, O LORD, are a shield around me;
you are my glory, the one who holds my
head high.

⁴ I cried out to the LORD,
and he answered me from his holy
mountain. *Interlude*

⁵ I lay down and slept,
yet I woke up in safety,
for the LORD was watching over me.

⁶ I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies
who surround me on every side.

⁷ Arise, O LORD!
Rescue me, my God!
Slap all my enemies in the face!
Shatter the teeth of the wicked!

⁸ Victory comes from you, O LORD.
May you bless your people. *Interlude*

PSALM 4

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be
accompanied by stringed instruments.*

¹ Answer me when I call to you,
O God who declares me innocent.
Free me from my troubles.
Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

² How long will you people ruin my
reputation?
How long will you make groundless
accusations?
How long will you continue your lies?
Interlude

³ You can be sure of this:
The LORD set apart the godly for himself.
The LORD will answer when I call to him.

⁴ Don't sin by letting anger control you.
Think about it overnight and remain
silent. *Interlude*

⁵ Offer sacrifices in the right spirit,
and trust the LORD.

⁶ Many people say, "Who will show us better
times?"

Let your face smile on us, LORD.

⁷ You have given me greater joy
than those who have abundant harvests
of grain and new wine.

⁸ In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, O LORD, will keep me safe.

PSALM 5

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be
accompanied by the flute.*

¹ O LORD, hear me as I pray;
pay attention to my groaning.

² Listen to my cry for help, my King and
my God,
for I pray to no one but you.

³ Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD.
Each morning I bring my requests to you
and wait expectantly.

⁴ O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness;
you cannot tolerate the sins of the
wicked.

⁵ Therefore, the proud may not stand in your
presence,
for you hate all who do evil.

⁶ You will destroy those who tell lies.
The LORD detests murderers and
deceivers.

⁷ Because of your unending love, I can enter
your house;
I will worship at your Temple with
deepest awe.

⁸ Lead me in the right path, O LORD,
or my enemies will conquer me.
Make your way plain for me to follow.

⁹ My enemies cannot speak a truthful word.
Their deepest desire is to destroy
others.



off and running

DON'T ASSOCIATE WITH THOSE WHO MOCK GOD

Read PSALM 1:1-6

If you recently became a Christian, you probably went through a radical lifestyle change. As a result, you no longer have the same priorities

that many of your non-Christian friends do. Yet, it may be hard to influence—or maybe end—those friendships. This passage illustrates the need for Christians to avoid hanging around people who have a bad influence on them. To understand this concept, compare the differences between Christians and non-Christians:

- Christians delight in following God's Word. . . . Non-Christians follow evil men's advice.
- Christians meditate on his laws day and night. . . . Non-Christians hang around with sinners.

Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.

Their tongues are filled with flattery.*

¹⁰ O God, declare them guilty.

Let them be caught in their own traps.
Drive them away because of their many sins,
for they have rebelled against you.

¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them sing joyful praises forever.
Spread your protection over them,
that all who love your name may be filled with joy.

¹² For you bless the godly, O LORD;
you surround them with your shield of love.

P S A L M 6

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by an eight-stringed instrument.**

¹ O LORD, don't rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your rage.

² Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am weak.

Heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.

³ I am sick at heart.

How long, O LORD, until you restore me?

⁴ Return, O LORD, and rescue me.
Save me because of your unfailing love.

⁵ For the dead do not remember you.
Who can praise you from the grave?*

⁶ I am worn out from sobbing.
All night I flood my bed with weeping,
drenching it with my tears.

⁷ My vision is blurred by grief;
my eyes are worn out because of all my enemies.

^{5:9} Greek version reads *with lies*. Compare Rom 3:13. ^{6:TITLE} Hebrew *with stringed instruments; according to the sheminith*. ^{6:5} Hebrew *from Sheol?*

⁸ Go away, all you who do evil,
for the LORD has heard my weeping.

⁹ The LORD has heard my plea;
the LORD will answer my prayer.

¹⁰ May all my enemies be disgraced and terrified.
May they suddenly turn back in shame.

P S A L M 7

A psalm of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush of the tribe of Benjamin.

¹ I come to you for protection, O LORD my God.

Save me from my persecutors—rescue me!

² If you don't, they will maul me like a lion,
tearing me to pieces with no one to rescue me.

³ O LORD my God, if I have done wrong or am guilty of injustice,

⁴ if I have betrayed a friend or plundered my enemy without cause,

⁵ then let my enemies capture me.
Let them trample me into the ground and drag my honor in the dust.

Interlude

⁶ Arise, O LORD, in anger!
Stand up against the fury of my enemies!
Wake up, my God, and bring justice!

⁷ Gather the nations before you.
Rule over them from on high.

⁸ The LORD judges the nations.
Declare me righteous, O LORD,
for I am innocent, O Most High!

⁹ End the evil of those who are wicked,
and defend the righteous.
For you look deep within the mind and heart,
O righteous God.

- Christians think about ways to follow God more closely. . . . Non-Christians scoff at the things of God.
- Christians are like a strong, fruit-bearing tree. . . . Non-Christians are like the chaff that blows away.
- Christians have God's protection. . . . Non-Christians face certain destruction.

While it is important to share your faith with non-Christians, it is important that you do not allow their lifestyle to influence you. Jude, in speaking of how to reach these people, wrote, "Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives" (Jude 1:23).

Reach out in God's love to your old friends, but also look for new friends who share your love for the Lord and will encourage you in your faith.

For the next note on "Relationships," turn to p. 1052.

- ¹⁰ God is my shield,
saving those whose hearts are true and
right.
- ¹¹ God is an honest judge.
He is angry with the wicked every day.
- ¹² If a person does not repent,
God* will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.
- ¹³ He will prepare his deadly weapons
and shoot his flaming arrows.
- ¹⁴ The wicked conceive evil;
they are pregnant with trouble
and give birth to lies.
- ¹⁵ They dig a deep pit to trap others,
then fall into it themselves.
- ¹⁶ The trouble they make for others backfires
on them.
The violence they plan falls on their own
heads.
- ¹⁷ I will thank the LORD because he is just;
I will sing praise to the name of the LORD
Most High.

PSALM 8

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be
accompanied by a stringed instrument.**

- ¹ O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills
the earth!
Your glory is higher than the heavens.
- ² You have taught children and infants
to tell of your strength,*
silencing your enemies
and all who oppose you.
- ³ When I look at the night sky and see the
work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set
in place—
- ⁴ what are mere mortals that you should
think about them,
human beings that you should care for
them?*
- ⁵ Yet you made them only a little lower
than God*
and crowned them* with glory and
honor.
- ⁶ You gave them charge of everything you
made,
putting all things under their authority—
- ⁷ the flocks and the herds
and all the wild animals,
⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,
and everything that swims the ocean
currents.

- ⁹ O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills
the earth!

PSALM 9

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung
to the tune "Death of the Son."*

- ¹ I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all the marvelous things you
have done.
- ² I will be filled with joy because of you.
I will sing praises to your name, O Most
High.
- ³ My enemies retreated;
they staggered and died when you
appeared.
- ⁴ For you have judged in my favor;
from your throne you have judged with
fairness.
- ⁵ You have rebuked the nations and
destroyed the wicked;
you have erased their names forever.
- ⁶ The enemy is finished, in endless ruins;
the cities you uprooted are now
forgotten.
- ⁷ But the LORD reigns forever,
executing judgment from his throne.
- ⁸ He will judge the world with justice
and rule the nations with fairness.
- ⁹ The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed,
a refuge in times of trouble.
- ¹⁰ Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, O LORD, do not abandon those
who search for you.
- ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD who reigns
in Jerusalem.*
Tell the world about his unforgettable
deeds.
- ¹² For he who avenges murder cares for the
helpless.
He does not ignore the cries of those
who suffer.
- ¹³ LORD, have mercy on me.
See how my enemies torment me.
Snatch me back from the jaws of death.
- ¹⁴ Save me so I can praise you publicly
at Jerusalem's gates,
so I can rejoice that you have
rescued me.
- ¹⁵ The nations have fallen into the pit they
dug for others.
Their own feet have been caught in the
trap they set.

7:12 Hebrew *he*. 8: TITLE Hebrew *according to the gittith*. 8:2 Greek version reads *to give you praise*. Compare Matt 21:16. 8:4 Hebrew *what is man that you should think of him, / the son of man that you should care for him?* 8:5a Or *Yet you made them only a little lower than the angels*; Hebrew reads *Yet you made him* (i.e., man) *a little lower than Elohim*. 8:5b Hebrew *him* (i.e., man); similarly in 8:6. 9:11 Hebrew *Zion*; also in 9:14.

- 16 The LORD is known for his justice.
The wicked are trapped by their own
deeds. *Quiet Interlude**
- 17 The wicked will go down to the grave.*
This is the fate of all the nations who
ignore God.
- 18 But the needy will not be ignored forever;
the hopes of the poor will not always be
crushed.
- 19 Arise, O LORD!
Do not let mere mortals defy you!
Judge the nations!
- 20 Make them tremble in fear, O LORD.
Let the nations know they are merely
human. *Interlude*

P S A L M 10

- 1 O LORD, why do you stand so far away?
Why do you hide when I am in trouble?
- 2 The wicked arrogantly hunt down the poor.
Let them be caught in the evil they plan
for others.
- 3 For they brag about their evil desires;
they praise the greedy and curse the
LORD.
- 4 The wicked are too proud to seek God.
They seem to think that God is dead.
- 5 Yet they succeed in everything they do.
They do not see your punishment
awaiting them.
They sneer at all their enemies.
- 6 They think, "Nothing bad will ever happen
to us!
We will be free of trouble forever!"
- 7 Their mouths are full of cursing, lies, and
threats.*
Trouble and evil are on the tips of their
tongues.
- 8 They lurk in ambush in the villages,
waiting to murder innocent people.
They are always searching for helpless
victims.
- 9 Like lions crouched in hiding,
they wait to pounce on the helpless.
Like hunters they capture the helpless
and drag them away in nets.
- 10 Their helpless victims are crushed;
they fall beneath the strength of the
wicked.
- 11 The wicked think, "God isn't watching us!
He has closed his eyes and won't even
see what we do!"
- 12 Arise, O LORD!
Punish the wicked, O God!
Do not ignore the helpless!



Have you ever eaten your food so quickly that you could not enjoy or savor its taste? Reading God's Word quickly is like inhaling your food. To truly understand the Bible, we need to slow down, read the passage more than once, and think about it. As you meditate on God's Word, you will know what is right and true.

While it is excellent to read through the Bible, to study it, and to memorize it, the truth of God's Word must also sink in. You must apply what you learned to your life. It is not how you mark your Bible, but how your Bible marks you. What you meditate on must affect the way you live.

When you meditate on God's Word and apply its truths to your life, you will experience the promise in verse 3. That does not mean you will be the richest, most successful person in the world. It means that your work, life, and attitude will be blessed because you are living by God's principles and experiencing the rewards of obedience to him.

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A38.

- 13 Why do the wicked get away with
despising God?
They think, "God will never call us to
account."
- 14 But you see the trouble and grief they
cause.
You take note of it and punish them.
The helpless put their trust in you.
You defend the orphans.
- 15 Break the arms of these wicked, evil people!
Go after them until the last one is
destroyed.
- 16 The LORD is king forever and ever!
The godless nations will vanish from
the land.
- 17 LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless.
Surely you will hear their cries and
comfort them.

9:16 Hebrew *Higgaion Selah*. The meaning of this phrase is uncertain. 9:17 Hebrew to *Sheol*. 10:7 Greek version reads *cursing and bitterness*. Compare Rom 3:14.

¹⁸ You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed,
so mere people can no longer terrify them.

PSALM 11

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

¹ I trust in the LORD for protection.
So why do you say to me,
“Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety!”

² The wicked are stringing their bows and fitting their arrows on the bowstrings.
They shoot from the shadows at those whose hearts are right.

³ The foundations of law and order have collapsed.
What can the righteous do?”

⁴ But the LORD is in his holy Temple;
the LORD still rules from heaven.
He watches everyone closely,
examining every person on earth.

⁵ The LORD examines both the righteous and the wicked.
He hates those who love violence.

⁶ He will rain down blazing coals and burning sulfur on the wicked,
punishing them with scorching winds.

⁷ For the righteous LORD loves justice.
The virtuous will see his face.

PSALM 12

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by an eight-stringed instrument.**

¹ Help, O LORD, for the godly are fast disappearing!
The faithful have vanished from the earth!

² Neighbors lie to each other,
speaking with flattering lips and deceitful hearts.

³ May the LORD cut off their flattering lips and silence their boastful tongues.

⁴ They say, “We will lie to our hearts’ content.
Our lips are our own—who can stop us?”

⁵ The LORD replies, “I have seen violence done to the helpless,
and I have heard the groans of the poor.
Now I will rise up to rescue them,
as they have longed for me to do.”

⁶ The LORD’s promises are pure,
like silver refined in a furnace,
purified seven times over.

⁷ Therefore, LORD, we know you will protect the oppressed,

preserving them forever from this lying generation,
⁸ even though the wicked strut about,
and evil is praised throughout the land.

PSALM 13

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

¹ O LORD, how long will you forget me?
Forever?
How long will you look the other way?

² How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?

³ Turn and answer me, O LORD my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.

⁴ Don’t let my enemies gloat, saying, “We have defeated him!”
Don’t let them rejoice at my downfall.

⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because you have rescued me.

⁶ I will sing to the LORD
because he is good to me.

PSALM 14

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

¹ Only fools say in their hearts,
“There is no God.”
They are corrupt, and their actions are evil;
not one of them does good!

² The LORD looks down from heaven on the entire human race;
he looks to see if anyone is truly wise,
if anyone seeks God.

³ But no, all have turned away;
all have become corrupt.*
No one does good,
not a single one!

⁴ Will those who do evil never learn?
They eat up my people like bread
and wouldn’t think of praying to the LORD.

⁵ Terror will grip them,
for God is with those who obey him.

⁶ The wicked frustrate the plans of the oppressed,
but the LORD will protect his people.

⁷ Who will come from Mount Zion to rescue Israel?
When the LORD restores his people,
Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel will rejoice.

P S A L M **15**
A psalm of David.

- 1 Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD?
 Who may enter your presence on your
 holy hill?
- 2 Those who lead blameless lives and do what
 is right,
 speaking the truth from sincere hearts.
- 3 Those who refuse to gossip
 or harm their neighbors
 or speak evil of their friends.
- 4 Those who despise flagrant sinners,
 and honor the faithful followers of the
 LORD,
 and keep their promises even when it
 hurts.
- 5 Those who lend money without charging
 interest,
 and who cannot be bribed to lie about
 the innocent.
 Such people will stand firm forever.

P S A L M **16**
A psalm of David.*

- 1 Keep me safe, O God,
 for I have come to you for refuge.
- 2 I said to the LORD, "You are my Master!
 Every good thing I have comes from you."
- 3 The godly people in the land
 are my true heroes!
 I take pleasure in them!
- 4 Troubles multiply for those who chase after
 other gods.
 I will not take part in their sacrifices
 of blood
 or even speak the names of their gods.
- 5 LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup
 of blessing.
 You guard all that is mine.
- 6 The land you have given me is a pleasant
 land.
 What a wonderful inheritance!
- 7 I will bless the LORD who guides me;
 even at night my heart instructs me.
- 8 I know the LORD is always with me.
 I will not be shaken, for he is right
 beside me.
- 9 No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice.*
 My body rests in safety.
- 10 For you will not leave my soul among
 the dead*
 or allow your holy one* to rot in the grave.

- 11 You will show me the way of life,
 granting me the joy of your presence
 and the pleasures of living with you
 forever.*

P S A L M **17**
A prayer of David.

- 1 O LORD, hear my plea for justice.
 Listen to my cry for help.
 Pay attention to my prayer,
 for it comes from honest lips.
- 2 Declare me innocent,
 for you see those who do right.
- 3 You have tested my thoughts and examined
 my heart in the night.
 You have scrutinized me and found
 nothing wrong.
 I am determined not to sin in what I say.
- 4 I have followed your commands,
 which keep me from following cruel and
 evil people.
- 5 My steps have stayed on your path;
 I have not wavered from following you.
- 6 I am praying to you because I know you will
 answer, O God.
 Bend down and listen as I pray.
- 7 Show me your unfailing love in wonderful
 ways.
 By your mighty power you rescue
 those who seek refuge from their
 enemies.
- 8 Guard me as you would guard your
 own eyes.*
 Hide me in the shadow of your wings.
- 9 Protect me from wicked people who
 attack me,
 from murderous enemies who
 surround me.
- 10 They are without pity.
 Listen to their boasting!
- 11 They track me down and surround me,
 watching for the chance to throw me
 to the ground.
- 12 They are like hungry lions, eager to tear
 me apart—
 like young lions hiding in ambush.
- 13 Arise, O LORD!
 Stand against them, and bring them
 to their knees!
 Rescue me from the wicked with your
 sword!
- 14 By the power of your hand, O LORD,
 destroy those who look to this world
 for their reward.

16: TITLE Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term. 16:9 Greek version reads *and my tongue shouts his praises*. Compare Acts 2:26. 16:10a Hebrew *in Sheol*. 16:10b Or *your Holy One*. 16:11 Greek version reads *You have shown me the way of life, / and you will fill me with the joy of your presence*. Compare Acts 2:28. 17:8 Hebrew *as the pupil of your eye*.

But satisfy the hunger of your treasured ones.

May their children have plenty,
leaving an inheritance for their descendants.

- 15 Because I am righteous, I will see you.
When I awake, I will see you face to face
and be satisfied.

P S A L M 18

For the choir director: A psalm of David, the servant of the LORD. He sang this song to the LORD on the day the LORD rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul. He sang:

- 1 I love you, LORD;
you are my strength.
- 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.
He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.
- 3 I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and he saved me from my enemies.
- 4 The ropes of death entangled me;
floods of destruction swept over me.
- 5 The grave* wrapped its ropes around me;
death laid a trap in my path.
- 6 But in my distress I cried out to the LORD;
yes, I prayed to my God for help.
He heard me from his sanctuary;
my cry to him reached his ears.
- 7 Then the earth quaked and trembled.
The foundations of the mountains shook;
they quaked because of his anger.
- 8 Smoke poured from his nostrils;
fierce flames leaped from his mouth.
Glowing coals blazed forth from him.
- 9 He opened the heavens and came down;
dark storm clouds were beneath his feet.
- 10 Mounted on a mighty angelic being,*
he flew,
soaring on the wings of the wind.
- 11 He shrouded himself in darkness,
veiling his approach with dark rain clouds.
- 12 Thick clouds shielded the brightness around him
and rained down hail and burning coals.*
- 13 The LORD thundered from heaven;
the voice of the Most High resounded
amid the hail and burning coals.
- 14 He shot his arrows and scattered his enemies;
his lightning flashed, and they were
greatly confused.

- 15 Then at your command, O LORD,
at the blast of your breath,
the bottom of the sea could be seen,
and the foundations of the earth were
laid bare.
- 16 He reached down from heaven and
rescued me;
he drew me out of deep waters.
- 17 He rescued me from my powerful
enemies,
from those who hated me and were
too strong for me.
- 18 They attacked me at a moment when I was
in distress,
but the LORD supported me.
- 19 He led me to a place of safety;
he rescued me because he delights
in me.
- 20 The LORD rewarded me for doing right;
he restored me because of my innocence.
- 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD;
I have not turned from my God to
follow evil.
- 22 I have followed all his regulations;
I have never abandoned his decrees.
- 23 I am blameless before God;
I have kept myself from sin.
- 24 The LORD rewarded me for doing right.
He has seen my innocence.
- 25 To the faithful you show yourself faithful;
to those with integrity you show
integrity.
- 26 To the pure you show yourself pure,
but to the wicked you show yourself
hostile.
- 27 You rescue the humble,
but you humiliate the proud.
- 28 You light a lamp for me.
The LORD, my God, lights up my
darkness.
- 29 In your strength I can crush an army;
with my God I can scale any wall.
- 30 God's way is perfect.
All the LORD's promises prove true.
He is a shield for all who look to him
for protection.
- 31 For who is God except the LORD?
Who but our God is a solid rock?
- 32 God arms me with strength,
and he makes my way perfect.
- 33 He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
enabling me to stand on mountain
heights.
- 34 He trains my hands for battle;
he strengthens my arm to draw a
bronze bow.

- 35 You have given me your shield of victory.
Your right hand supports me;
your help has made me great.
- 36 You have made a wide path for my feet
to keep them from slipping.
- 37 I chased my enemies and caught them;
I did not stop until they were conquered.
- 38 I struck them down so they could not
get up;
they fell beneath my feet.
- 39 You have armed me with strength for the
battle;
you have subdued my enemies under
my feet.
- 40 You placed my foot on their necks.
I have destroyed all who hated me.
- 41 They called for help, but no one came
to their rescue.
They even cried to the LORD, but he
refused to answer.
- 42 I ground them as fine as dust in the wind.
I swept them into the gutter like dirt.
- 43 You gave me victory over my accusers.
You appointed me ruler over nations;
people I don't even know now serve me.
- 44 As soon as they hear of me, they submit;
foreign nations cringe before me.
- 45 They all lose their courage
and come trembling from their
strongholds.
- 46 The LORD lives! Praise to my Rock!
May the God of my salvation be exalted!
- 47 He is the God who pays back those who
harm me;
he subdues the nations under me
and rescues me from my enemies.
You hold me safe beyond the reach of my
enemies;
you save me from violent opponents.
- 49 For this, O LORD, I will praise you among
the nations;
I will sing praises to your name.
- 50 You give great victories to your king;
you show unfailing love to your
anointed,
to David and all his descendants
forever.

P S A L M **19**
For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- ¹ The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
- ² Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
- ³ They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.*

- ⁴ Yet their message has gone throughout
the earth,
and their words to all the world.
God has made a home in the heavens for
the sun.
- ⁵ It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom
after his wedding.
It rejoices like a great athlete eager to run
the race.
- ⁶ The sun rises at one end of the heavens
and follows its course to the other end.
Nothing can hide from its heat.
- ⁷ The instructions of the LORD are perfect,
reviving the soul.
The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
- ⁸ The commandments of the LORD
are right,
bringing joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are clear,
giving insight for living.
- ⁹ Reverence for the LORD is pure,
lasting forever.
The laws of the LORD are true;
each one is fair.
- ¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold,
even the finest gold.
They are sweeter than honey,
even honey dripping from the comb.
- ¹¹ They are a warning to your servant,
a great reward for those who obey
them.
- ¹² How can I know all the sins lurking
in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
- ¹³ Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
- ¹⁴ May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

P S A L M **20**
For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- ¹ In times of trouble, may the LORD answer
your cry.
May the name of the God of Jacob keep
you safe from all harm.
- ² May he send you help from his sanctuary
and strengthen you from Jerusalem.*
- ³ May he remember all your gifts
and look favorably on your burnt
offerings.

Interlude

- 4 May he grant your heart's desires
and make all your plans succeed.
- 5 May we shout for joy when we hear of your
victory
and raise a victory banner in the name
of our God.
May the LORD answer all your prayers.
- 6 Now I know that the LORD rescues his
anointed king.
He will answer him from his holy
heaven
and rescue him by his great power.
- 7 Some nations boast of their chariots and
horses,
but we boast in the name of the LORD
our God.
- 8 Those nations will fall down and collapse,
but we will rise up and stand firm.
- 9 Give victory to our king, O LORD!
Answer our cry for help.

P S A L M **21**

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 How the king rejoices in your strength,
O LORD!
He shouts with joy because you give him
victory.
- 2 For you have given him his heart's desire;
you have withheld nothing he requested.
Interlude
- 3 You welcomed him back with success and
prosperity.
You placed a crown of finest gold on
his head.
- 4 He asked you to preserve his life,
and you granted his request.
The days of his life stretch on forever.
- 5 Your victory brings him great honor,
and you have clothed him with splendor
and majesty.
- 6 You have endowed him with eternal
blessings
and given him the joy of your presence.
- 7 For the king trusts in the LORD.
The unfailing love of the Most High will
keep him from stumbling.
- 8 You will capture all your enemies.
Your strong right hand will seize all who
hate you.
- 9 You will throw them in a flaming furnace
when you appear.
The LORD will consume them in his anger;
fire will devour them.
- 10 You will wipe their children from the face
of the earth;
they will never have descendants.

- 11 Although they plot against you,
their evil schemes will never succeed.
- 12 For they will turn and run
when they see your arrows aimed at them.
- 13 Rise up, O LORD, in all your power.
With music and singing we celebrate
your mighty acts.

P S A L M **22**

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung
to the tune "Doe of the Dawn."*

- 1 My God, my God, why have you
abandoned me?
Why are you so far away when I groan
for help?
- 2 Every day I call to you, my God, but you do
not answer.
Every night you hear my voice, but I find
no relief.
- 3 Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- 4 Our ancestors trusted in you,
and you rescued them.
- 5 They cried out to you and were saved.
They trusted in you and were never
disgraced.
- 6 But I am a worm and not a man.
I am scorned and despised by all!
- 7 Everyone who sees me mocks me.
They sneer and shake their heads, saying,
- 8 "Is this the one who relies on the LORD?
Then let the LORD save him!
If the LORD loves him so much,
let the LORD rescue him!"
- 9 Yet you brought me safely from my
mother's womb
and led me to trust you at my mother's
breast.
- 10 I was thrust into your arms at my birth.
You have been my God from the moment
I was born.
- 11 Do not stay so far from me,
for trouble is near,
and no one else can help me.
- 12 My enemies surround me like a herd
of bulls;
fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed
me in!
- 13 Like lions they open their jaws against me,
roaring and tearing into their prey.
- 14 My life is poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax,
melting within me.
- 15 My strength has dried up like
sunbaked clay.

My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.

16 My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me.

They have pierced my hands and feet.

17 I can count all my bones.

My enemies stare at me and gloat.

18 They divide my garments among themselves

and throw dice* for my clothing.

19 O LORD, do not stay far away!

You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!

20 Save me from the sword;

spare my precious life from these dogs.

21 Snatch me from the lion's jaws

and from the horns of these wild oxen.

22 I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.*

I will praise you among your assembled people.

23 Praise the LORD, all you who fear him!

Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!

Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

24 For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.

He has not turned his back on them, but has listened to their cries for help.

25 I will praise you in the great assembly.

I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you.

26 The poor will eat and be satisfied.

All who seek the LORD will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

27 The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him.

All the families of the nations will bow down before him.

28 For royal power belongs to the LORD.

He rules all the nations.

29 Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.

Bow before him, all who are mortal, all whose lives will end as dust.

30 Our children will also serve him.

Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord.

31 His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.

They will hear about everything he has done.

P S A L M 23

A psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.

2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.

3 He renews my strength.

He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley,* I will not be afraid,

for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

5 You prepare a feast for me

in the presence of my enemies.

You honor me by anointing my head with oil.

My cup overflows with blessings.

6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me

all the days of my life,

and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

P S A L M 24

A psalm of David.

1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.

2 For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths.

3 Who may climb the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

4 Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies.

5 They will receive the LORD's blessing and have a right relationship with God their savior.

6 Such people may seek you and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob.

Interlude

7 Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter.

8 Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty; the LORD, invincible in battle.

9 Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter.

10 Who is the King of glory?
The LORD of Heaven's Armies—
he is the King of glory. *Interlude*

PSALM 25*
A psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, I give my life to you.
- 2 I trust in you, my God!
Do not let me be disgraced,
or let my enemies rejoice in my defeat.
- 3 No one who trusts in you will ever be
disgraced,
but disgrace comes to those who try
to deceive others.
- 4 Show me the right path, O LORD;
point out the road for me to follow.
- 5 Lead me by your truth and teach me,
for you are the God who saves me.
All day long I put my hope in you.
- 6 Remember, O LORD, your compassion and
unfailing love,
which you have shown from long ages
past.
- 7 Do not remember the rebellious sins of
my youth.
Remember me in the light of your
unfailing love,
for you are merciful, O LORD.
- 8 The LORD is good and does what is right;
he shows the proper path to those who
go astray.
- 9 He leads the humble in doing right,
teaching them his way.
- 10 The LORD leads with unfailing love and
faithfulness
all who keep his covenant and obey his
demands.
- 11 For the honor of your name, O LORD,
forgive my many, many sins.
- 12 Who are those who fear the LORD?
He will show them the path they should
choose.
- 13 They will live in prosperity,
and their children will inherit the land.
- 14 The LORD is a friend to those who fear him.
He teaches them his covenant.
- 15 My eyes are always on the LORD,
for he rescues me from the traps of
my enemies.
- 16 Turn to me and have mercy,
for I am alone and in deep distress.
- 17 My problems go from bad to worse.
Oh, save me from them all!
- 18 Feel my pain and see my trouble.
Forgive all my sins.

- 19 See how many enemies I have
and how viciously they hate me!
- 20 Protect me! Rescue my life from them!
Do not let me be disgraced, for in you
I take refuge.
- 21 May integrity and honesty protect me,
for I put my hope in you.
- 22 O God, ransom Israel
from all its troubles.

PSALM 26
A psalm of David.

- 1 Declare me innocent, O LORD,
for I have acted with integrity;
I have trusted in the LORD without
wavering.
- 2 Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me.
Test my motives and my heart.
- 3 For I am always aware of your unfailing
love,
and I have lived according to your truth.
- 4 I do not spend time with liars
or go along with hypocrites.
- 5 I hate the gatherings of those who do evil,
and I refuse to join in with the wicked.
- 6 I wash my hands to declare my innocence.
I come to your altar, O LORD,
7 singing a song of thanksgiving
and telling of all your wonders.
- 8 I love your sanctuary, LORD,
the place where your glorious presence
dwells.
- 9 Don't let me suffer the fate of sinners.
Don't condemn me along with
murderers.
- 10 Their hands are dirty with evil schemes,
and they constantly take bribes.
- 11 But I am not like that; I live with integrity.
So redeem me and show me mercy.
- 12 Now I stand on solid ground,
and I will publicly praise the LORD.

PSALM 27
A psalm of David.

- 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation—
so why should I be afraid?
The LORD is my fortress, protecting me
from danger,
so why should I tremble?
- 2 When evil people come to devour me,
when my enemies and foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.
- 3 Though a mighty army surrounds me,
my heart will not be afraid.
Even if I am attacked,
I will remain confident.

- 4 The one thing I ask of the LORD—
the thing I seek most—
is to live in the house of the LORD all the
days of my life,
delighting in the LORD's perfections
and meditating in his Temple.
- 5 For he will conceal me there when troubles
come;
he will hide me in his sanctuary.
He will place me out of reach on a high
rock.
- 6 Then I will hold my head high
above my enemies who surround me.
At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with
shouts of joy,
singing and praising the LORD with
music.
- 7 Hear me as I pray, O LORD.
Be merciful and answer me!
- 8 My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk
with me."
And my heart responds, "LORD, I am
coming."
- 9 Do not turn your back on me.
Do not reject your servant in anger.
You have always been my helper.
Don't leave me now; don't abandon me,
O God of my salvation!
- 10 Even if my father and mother abandon me,
the LORD will hold me close.
- 11 Teach me how to live, O LORD.
Lead me along the right path,
for my enemies are waiting for me.
- 12 Do not let me fall into their hands.
For they accuse me of things I've never
done;
with every breath they threaten me with
violence.
- 13 Yet I am confident I will see the LORD's
goodness
while I am here in the land of the living.
- 14 Wait patiently for the LORD.
Be brave and courageous.
Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.

P S A L M 28
A psalm of David.

- 1 I pray to you, O LORD, my rock.
Do not turn a deaf ear to me.
For if you are silent,
I might as well give up and die.
- 2 Listen to my prayer for mercy
as I cry out to you for help,
as I lift my hands toward your holy
sanctuary.

- 3 Do not drag me away with the wicked—
with those who do evil—
those who speak friendly words to their
neighbors
while planning evil in their hearts.
- 4 Give them the punishment they so richly
deserve!
Measure it out in proportion to their
wickedness.
Pay them back for all their evil deeds!
Give them a taste of what they have done
to others.
- 5 They care nothing for what the LORD
has done
or for what his hands have made.
So he will tear them down,
and they will never be rebuilt!
- 6 Praise the LORD!
For he has heard my cry for mercy.
- 7 The LORD is my strength and shield.
I trust him with all my heart.
He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy.
I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.
- 8 The LORD gives his people strength.
He is a safe fortress for his anointed king.
- 9 Save your people!
Bless Israel, your special possession.*
Lead them like a shepherd,
and carry them in your arms forever.

P S A L M 29
A psalm of David.

- 1 Honor the LORD, you heavenly beings*;
honor the LORD for his glory and strength.
- 2 Honor the LORD for the glory of his name.
Worship the LORD in the splendor of his
holiness.
- 3 The voice of the LORD echoes above the sea.
The God of glory thunders.
The LORD thunders over the mighty sea.
- 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.
- 5 The voice of the LORD splits the mighty
cedars;
the LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon.
- 6 He makes Lebanon's mountains skip like
a calf;
he makes Mount Hermon* leap like
a young wild ox.
- 7 The voice of the LORD strikes
with bolts of lightning.
- 8 The voice of the LORD makes the barren
wilderness quake;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of
Kadesh.

- 9 The voice of the LORD twists mighty oaks*
and strips the forests bare.
In his Temple everyone shouts, "Glory!"
- 10 The LORD rules over the floodwaters.
The LORD reigns as king forever.
- 11 The LORD gives his people strength.
The LORD blesses them with peace.

PSALM 30

*A psalm of David. A song for the dedication
of the Temple.*

- 1 I will exalt you, LORD, for you rescued me.
You refused to let my enemies triumph
over me.
- 2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you restored my health.
- 3 You brought me up from the grave,*
O LORD.
You kept me from falling into the pit
of death.
- 4 Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones!
Praise his holy name.
- 5 For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may last through the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
- 6 When I was prosperous, I said,
"Nothing can stop me now!"
- 7 Your favor, O LORD, made me as secure
as a mountain.
Then you turned away from me, and
I was shattered.
- 8 I cried out to you, O LORD.
I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,
- 9 "What will you gain if I die,
if I sink into the grave?
Can my dust praise you?
Can it tell of your faithfulness?"
- 10 Hear me, LORD, and have mercy on me.
Help me, O LORD."
- 11 You have turned my mourning into joyful
dancing.
You have taken away my clothes of
mourning and clothed me with joy,
- 12 that I might sing praises to you and not
be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks
forever!

PSALM 31

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, I have come to you for protection;
don't let me be disgraced.
Save me, for you do what is right.
- 2 Turn your ear to listen to me;
- rescue me quickly.
Be my rock of protection,
a fortress where I will be safe.
- 3 You are my rock and my fortress.
For the honor of your name, lead me
out of this danger.
- 4 Pull me from the trap my enemies set
for me,
for I find protection in you alone.
- 5 I entrust my spirit into your hand.
Rescue me, LORD, for you are a
faithful God.
- 6 I hate those who worship worthless idols.
I trust in the LORD.
- 7 I will be glad and rejoice in your unfailing
love,
for you have seen my troubles,
and you care about the anguish
of my soul.
- 8 You have not handed me over to my
enemies
but have set me in a safe place.
- 9 Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am
in distress.
Tears blur my eyes.
My body and soul are withering away.
- 10 I am dying from grief;
my years are shortened by sadness.
Sin has drained my strength;
I am wasting away from within.
- 11 I am scorned by all my enemies
and despised by my neighbors—
even my friends are afraid to come
near me.
When they see me on the street,
they run the other way.
- 12 I am ignored as if I were dead,
as if I were a broken pot.
- 13 I have heard the many rumors about me,
and I am surrounded by terror.
My enemies conspire against me,
plotting to take my life.
- 14 But I am trusting you, O LORD,
saying, "You are my God!"
- 15 My future is in your hands.
Rescue me from those who hunt me
down relentlessly.
- 16 Let your favor shine on your servant.
In your unfailing love, rescue me.
- 17 Don't let me be disgraced, O LORD,
for I call out to you for help.
Let the wicked be disgraced;
let them lie silent in the grave.*
- 18 Silence their lying lips—
those proud and arrogant lips that
accuse the godly.

- ¹⁹ How great is the goodness
you have stored up for those who
fear you.
You lavish it on those who come to you
for protection,
blessing them before the watching
world.
- ²⁰ You hide them in the shelter of your
presence,
safe from those who conspire against
them.
You shelter them in your presence,
far from accusing tongues.
- ²¹ Praise the LORD,
for he has shown me the wonders of
his unfailing love.
He kept me safe when my city was under
attack.
- ²² In panic I cried out,
"I am cut off from the LORD!"
But you heard my cry for mercy
and answered my call for help.
- ²³ Love the LORD, all you godly ones!
For the LORD protects those who are loyal
to him,
but he harshly punishes the arrogant.
- ²⁴ So be strong and courageous,
all you who put your hope in the LORD!

P S A L M **32**
A psalm of David.*

- ¹ Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!
- ² Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared
of guilt,*
whose lives are lived in complete
honesty!
- ³ When I refused to confess my sin,
my body wasted away,
and I groaned all day long.
- ⁴ Day and night your hand of discipline
was heavy on me.
My strength evaporated like water in
the summer heat. *Interlude*
- ⁵ Finally, I confessed all my sins to you
and stopped trying to hide my guilt.
I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion
to the LORD."
And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.
Interlude
- ⁶ Therefore, let all the godly pray to you
while there is still time,
that they may not drown in the
floodwaters of judgment.

- ⁷ For you are my hiding place;
you protect me from trouble.
You surround me with songs of victory.
Interlude
- ⁸ The LORD says, "I will guide you along the
best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you.
- ⁹ Do not be like a senseless horse or mule
that needs a bit and bridle to keep it
under control."
- ¹⁰ Many sorrows come to the wicked,
but unfailing love surrounds those who
trust the LORD.
- ¹¹ So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you
who obey him!
Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are
pure!

P S A L M **33**

- ¹ Let the godly sing for joy to the LORD;
it is fitting for the pure to praise him.
- ² Praise the LORD with melodies on the lyre;
make music for him on the ten-stringed
harp.
- ³ Sing a new song of praise to him;
play skillfully on the harp, and sing
with joy.
- ⁴ For the word of the LORD holds true,
and we can trust everything he does.
- ⁵ He loves whatever is just and good;
the unfailing love of the LORD fills
the earth.
- ⁶ The LORD merely spoke,
and the heavens were created.
He breathed the word,
and all the stars were born.
- ⁷ He assigned the sea its boundaries
and locked the oceans in vast
reservoirs.
- ⁸ Let the whole world fear the LORD,
and let everyone stand in awe of him.
- ⁹ For when he spoke, the world began!
It appeared at his command.
- ¹⁰ The LORD frustrates the plans of the nations
and thwarts all their schemes.
- ¹¹ But the LORD's plans stand firm forever;
his intentions can never be shaken.
- ¹² What joy for the nation whose God
is the LORD,
whose people he has chosen as his
inheritance.
- ¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven
and sees the whole human race.
- ¹⁴ From his throne he observes
all who live on the earth.

- 15 He made their hearts,
so he understands everything they do.
- 16 The best-equipped army cannot
save a king,
nor is great strength enough to save
a warrior.
- 17 Don't count on your warhorse to give you
victory—
for all its strength, it cannot save you.
- 18 But the LORD watches over those who
fear him,
those who rely on his unfailing love.
- 19 He rescues them from death
and keeps them alive in times of famine.
- 20 We put our hope in the LORD.
He is our help and our shield.
- 21 In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
- 22 Let your unfailing love surround us, LORD,
for our hope is in you alone.

PSALM **34***

A psalm of David, regarding the time he pretended to be insane in front of Abimelech, who sent him away.

- 1 I will praise the LORD at all times.
I will constantly speak his praises.
- 2 I will boast only in the LORD;
let all who are helpless take heart.
- 3 Come, let us tell of the LORD's greatness;
let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me.
He freed me from all my fears.
- 5 Those who look to him for help will be
radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their
faces.
- 6 In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD
listened;
he saved me from all my troubles.
- 7 For the angel of the LORD is a guard;
he surrounds and defends all who
fear him.
- 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good.
Oh, the joys of those who take refuge
in him!
- 9 Fear the LORD, you his godly people,
for those who fear him will have all they
need.
- 10 Even strong young lions sometimes go
hungry,
but those who trust in the LORD will lack
no good thing.
- 11 Come, my children, and listen to me,
and I will teach you to fear the LORD.

- 12 Does anyone want to live a life
that is long and prosperous?
- 13 Then keep your tongue from speaking evil
and your lips from telling lies!
- 14 Turn away from evil and do good.
Search for peace, and work to maintain it.
- 15 The eyes of the LORD watch over those who
do right;
his ears are open to their cries for help.
- 16 But the LORD turns his face against those
who do evil;
he will erase their memory from the
earth.
- 17 The LORD hears his people when they call
to him for help.
He rescues them from all their troubles.
- 18 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are
crushed.
- 19 The righteous person faces many troubles,
but the LORD comes to the rescue each
time.
- 20 For the LORD protects the bones of the
righteous;
not one of them is broken!
- 21 Calamity will surely overtake the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be
punished.
- 22 But the LORD will redeem those who
serve him.
No one who takes refuge in him will be
condemned.

PSALM **35**

A psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, oppose those who oppose me.
Fight those who fight against me.
- 2 Put on your armor, and take up your shield.
Prepare for battle, and come to my aid.
- 3 Lift up your spear and javelin
against those who pursue me.
Let me hear you say,
"I will give you victory!"
- 4 Bring shame and disgrace on those trying to
kill me;
turn them back and humiliate those who
want to harm me.
- 5 Blow them away like chaff in the wind—
a wind sent by the angel of the LORD.
- 6 Make their path dark and slippery,
with the angel of the LORD pursuing
them.
- 7 I did them no wrong, but they laid a trap
for me.
I did them no wrong, but they dug a pit
to catch me.

- 8 So let sudden ruin come upon them!
Let them be caught in the trap they set for me!
Let them be destroyed in the pit they dug for me.
- 9 Then I will rejoice in the LORD.
I will be glad because he rescues me.
- 10 With every bone in my body I will praise him:
“LORD, who can compare with you?
Who else rescues the helpless from the strong?
Who else protects the helpless and poor from those who rob them?”
- 11 Malicious witnesses testify against me.
They accuse me of crimes I know nothing about.
- 12 They repay me evil for good.
I am sick with despair.
- 13 Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them.
I denied myself by fasting for them,
but my prayers returned unanswered.
- 14 I was sad, as though they were my friends or family,
as if I were grieving for my own mother.
- 15 But they are glad now that I am in trouble;
they gleefully join together against me.
I am attacked by people I don't even know;
they slander me constantly.
- 16 They mock me and call me names;
they snarl at me.
- 17 How long, O Lord, will you look on and do nothing?
Rescue me from their fierce attacks.
Protect my life from these lions!
- 18 Then I will thank you in front of the great assembly.
I will praise you before all the people.
- 19 Don't let my treacherous enemies rejoice over my defeat.
Don't let those who hate me without cause gloat over my sorrow.
- 20 They don't talk of peace;
they plot against innocent people who mind their own business.
- 21 They shout, “Aha! Aha!
With our own eyes we saw him do it!”
- 22 O LORD, you know all about this.
Do not stay silent.
Do not abandon me now, O Lord.
- 23 Wake up! Rise to my defense!
Take up my case, my God and my Lord.
- 24 Declare me not guilty, O LORD my God,
for you give justice.
Don't let my enemies laugh about me in my troubles.

- 25 Don't let them say, “Look, we got what we wanted!
Now we will eat him alive!”
- 26 May those who rejoice at my troubles be humiliated and disgraced.
May those who triumph over me be covered with shame and dishonor.
- 27 But give great joy to those who came to my defense.
Let them continually say, “Great is the LORD,
who delights in blessing his servant with peace!”
- 28 Then I will proclaim your justice,
and I will praise you all day long.

P S A L M 36

For the choir director: A psalm of David, the servant of the LORD.

- 1 Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts.
They have no fear of God at all.
- 2 In their blind conceit,
they cannot see how wicked they really are.
- 3 Everything they say is crooked and deceitful.
They refuse to act wisely or do good.
- 4 They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots.
Their actions are never good.
They make no attempt to turn from evil.
- 5 Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.
- 6 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your justice like the ocean depths.
You care for people and animals alike,
O LORD.
- 7 How precious is your unfailing love, O God!
All humanity finds shelter
in the shadow of your wings.
- 8 You feed them from the abundance of your own house,
letting them drink from your river of delights.
- 9 For you are the fountain of life,
the light by which we see.
- 10 Pour out your unfailing love on those who love you;
give justice to those with honest hearts.
- 11 Don't let the proud trample me
or the wicked push me around.

¹² Look! Those who do evil have fallen!
They are thrown down, never to rise again.

PSALM **37***
A psalm of David.

¹ Don't worry about the wicked
or envy those who do wrong.
² For like grass, they soon fade away.
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.
³ Trust in the LORD and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land
and prosper.
⁴ Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your heart's desires.
⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Trust him, and he will help you.
⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like
the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will shine
like the noonday sun.
⁷ Be still in the presence of the LORD,
and wait patiently for him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.
⁸ Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.
⁹ For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the LORD will
possess the land.
¹⁰ Soon the wicked will disappear.
Though you look for them, they will
be gone.
¹¹ The lowly will possess the land
and will live in peace and prosperity.
¹² The wicked plot against the godly;
they snarl at them in defiance.

³⁷ This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; each stanza begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

¹³ But the Lord just laughs,
for he sees their day of judgment coming.

¹⁴ The wicked draw their swords
and string their bows
to kill the poor and the oppressed,
to slaughter those who do right.
¹⁵ But their swords will stab their own hearts,
and their bows will be broken.
¹⁶ It is better to be godly and have little
than to be evil and rich.
¹⁷ For the strength of the wicked will be
shattered,
but the LORD takes care of the godly.
¹⁸ Day by day the LORD takes care of the
innocent,
and they will receive an inheritance that
lasts forever.
¹⁹ They will not be disgraced in hard times;
even in famine they will have more than
enough.
²⁰ But the wicked will die.
The LORD's enemies are like flowers
in a field—
they will disappear like smoke.
²¹ The wicked borrow and never repay,
but the godly are generous givers.
²² Those the LORD blesses will possess the land,
but those he curses will die.
²³ The LORD directs the steps of the godly.
He delights in every detail of their lives.
²⁴ Though they stumble, they will never fall,
for the LORD holds them by the hand.
²⁵ Once I was young, and now I am old.
Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned
or their children begging for bread.
²⁶ The godly always give generous loans to
others,
and their children are a blessing.



off and running

**DON'T WASTE TIME PURSUING
THINGS THAT WON'T LAST**

Read PSALM 39:1-7

David made at least three profound realizations in these seven verses. First, he recognized that everyone's time on earth is short.

Second, he acknowledged that a person's efforts to accumulate wealth are futile, because the person who works for wealth may not get to enjoy it. In addition, the time he or she spends doing so could be better spent pursuing God. Third, David understood that his only hope was in God.

These points are just as important for us today. When we focus our attention on the problems, pursuits, and pleasures of this life, we will always get side-

- 27 Turn from evil and do good,
and you will live in the land forever.
- 28 For the LORD loves justice,
and he will never abandon the godly.
- He will keep them safe forever,
but the children of the wicked
will die.
- 29 The godly will possess the land
and will live there forever.
- 30 The godly offer good counsel;
they teach right from wrong.
- 31 They have made God's law their own,
so they will never slip from his path.
- 32 The wicked wait in ambush for the godly,
looking for an excuse to kill them.
- 33 But the LORD will not let the wicked
succeed
or let the godly be condemned when
they are put on trial.
- 34 Put your hope in the LORD.
Travel steadily along his path.
He will honor you by giving you the land.
You will see the wicked destroyed.
- 35 I have seen wicked and ruthless people
flourishing like a tree in its native soil.
- 36 But when I looked again, they were gone!
Though I searched for them, I could not
find them!
- 37 Look at those who are honest and good,
for a wonderful future awaits those who
love peace.
- 38 But the rebellious will be destroyed;
they have no future.
- 39 The LORD rescues the godly;
he is their fortress in times of trouble.
- 40 The LORD helps them,
rescuing them from the wicked.
He saves them,
and they find shelter in him.

P S A L M **38**

A psalm of David, asking God to remember him.

- 1 O LORD, don't rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your rage!
- 2 Your arrows have struck deep,
and your blows are crushing me.
- 3 Because of your anger, my whole body
is sick;
my health is broken because of my sins.
- 4 My guilt overwhelms me—
it is a burden too heavy to bear.
- 5 My wounds fester and stink
because of my foolish sins.
- 6 I am bent over and racked with pain.
All day long I walk around filled with
grief.
- 7 A raging fever burns within me,
and my health is broken.
- 8 I am exhausted and completely crushed.
My groans come from an anguished
heart.
- 9 You know what I long for, Lord;
you hear my every sigh.
- 10 My heart beats wildly, my strength fails,
and I am going blind.
- 11 My loved ones and friends stay away,
fearing my disease.
Even my own family stands
at a distance.
- 12 Meanwhile, my enemies lay traps to kill me.
Those who wish me harm make plans
to ruin me.
All day long they plan their treachery.
- 13 But I am deaf to all their threats.
I am silent before them as one who
cannot speak.
- 14 I choose to hear nothing,
and I make no reply.
- 15 For I am waiting for you, O LORD.
You must answer for me, O Lord my God.
- 16 I prayed, "Don't let my enemies gloat over me
or rejoice at my downfall."

tracked from what really matters—knowing Jesus. When we focus on God, we will realize how frail and short life is, and we will see that our hope is in God alone. For that reason, we should pursue things of eternal value. That may include supporting missionaries financially, faithfully praying for unbelievers, sharing Christ with coworkers, or providing food and shelter for a family in need.

What is your greatest pursuit? money? power? success? a big house or cool car? As you evaluate your pursuits, remember the words of Jesus: "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be" (Matthew 6:19-21).

For the next note on "Priorities," turn to p. 634.

- 17 I am on the verge of collapse,
facing constant pain.
- 18 But I confess my sins;
I am deeply sorry for what I have done.
- 19 I have many aggressive enemies;
they hate me without reason.
- 20 They repay me evil for good
and oppose me for pursuing good.
- 21 Do not abandon me, O LORD.
Do not stand at a distance, my God.
- 22 Come quickly to help me,
O Lord my savior.

P S A L M **39**

For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 I said to myself, "I will watch what I do
and not sin in what I say.
I will hold my tongue
when the ungodly are around me."
- 2 But as I stood there in silence—
not even speaking of good things—
the turmoil within me grew worse.
- 3 The more I thought about it,
the hotter I got,
igniting a fire of words:
- 4 "LORD, remind me how brief my time
on earth will be.
Remind me that my days are numbered—
how fleeting my life is.
- 5 You have made my life no longer than the
width of my hand.
My entire lifetime is just a moment
to you;
at best, each of us is but a breath."

Interlude

- 6 We are merely moving shadows,
and all our busy rushing ends in nothing.
We heap up wealth,
not knowing who will spend it.
- 7 And so, Lord, where do I put my hope?
My only hope is in you.
- 8 Rescue me from my rebellion.
Do not let fools mock me.
- 9 I am silent before you; I won't say a word,
for my punishment is from you.
- 10 But please stop striking me!
I am exhausted by the blows from
your hand.
- 11 When you discipline us for our sins,
you consume like a moth what is
precious to us.
Each of us is but a breath.
- 12 Hear my prayer, O LORD!
Listen to my cries for help!
Don't ignore my tears.
For I am your guest—

Interlude

- a traveler passing through,
as my ancestors were before me.
- 13 Leave me alone so I can smile again
before I am gone and exist no more.

P S A L M **40**

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.
- 2 He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.
- 3 He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see what he has done and be
amazed.
They will put their trust in the LORD.
- 4 Oh, the joys of those who trust the LORD,
who have no confidence in the proud
or in those who worship idols.
- 5 O LORD my God, you have performed many
wonders for us.
Your plans for us are too numerous to list.
You have no equal.
If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds,
I would never come to the end of them.
- 6 You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings.
Now that you have made me listen,
I finally understand*—
you don't require burnt offerings or sin
offerings.
- 7 Then I said, "Look, I have come.
As is written about me in the Scriptures:
- 8 I take joy in doing your will, my God,
for your instructions are written
on my heart."
- 9 I have told all your people about your
justice.
I have not been afraid to speak out,
as you, O LORD, well know.
- 10 I have not kept the good news of your
justice hidden in my heart;
I have talked about your faithfulness
and saving power.
I have told everyone in the great assembly
of your unfailing love and faithfulness.
- 11 LORD, don't hold back your tender mercies
from me.
Let your unfailing love and faithfulness
always protect me.
- 12 For troubles surround me—
too many to count!
My sins pile up so high
I can't see my way out.

- They outnumber the hairs on my head.
I have lost all courage.
- 13 Please, LORD, rescue me!
Come quickly, LORD, and help me.
- 14 May those who try to destroy me
be humiliated and put to shame.
May those who take delight in my trouble
be turned back in disgrace.
- 15 Let them be horrified by their shame,
for they said, "Aha! We've got him now!"
- 16 But may all who search for you
be filled with joy and gladness in you.
May those who love your salvation
repeatedly shout, "The LORD is great!"
- 17 As for me, since I am poor and needy,
let the Lord keep me in his thoughts.
You are my helper and my savior.
O my God, do not delay.

P S A L M **41**

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 Oh, the joys of those who are kind to the
poor!
The LORD rescues them when they are
in trouble.
- 2 The LORD protects them
and keeps them alive.
He gives them prosperity in the land
and rescues them from their enemies.
- 3 The LORD nurses them when they
are sick
and restores them to health.
- 4 "O LORD," I prayed, "have mercy on me.
Heal me, for I have sinned against you."
- 5 But my enemies say nothing but evil
about me.
"How soon will he die and be forgotten?"
they ask.
- 6 They visit me as if they were my friends,
but all the while they gather gossip,
and when they leave, they spread it
everywhere.
- 7 All who hate me whisper about me,
imagining the worst.
- 8 "He has some fatal disease," they say.
"He will never get out of that bed!"
- 9 Even my best friend, the one I trusted
completely,
the one who shared my food, has turned
against me.
- 10 LORD, have mercy on me.
Make me well again, so I can pay them
back!
- 11 I know you are pleased with me,
for you have not let my enemies triumph
over me.

- 12 You have preserved my life because I am
innocent;
you have brought me into your presence
forever.
- 13 Praise the LORD, the God of Israel,
who lives from everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and amen!

BOOK TWO (Psalms 42–72)

P S A L M **42**

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants
of Korah.*

- 1 As the deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for you, O God.
- 2 I thirst for God, the living God.
When can I go and stand before him?
- 3 Day and night I have only tears for food,
while my enemies continually taunt me,
saying,
"Where is this God of yours?"
- 4 My heart is breaking
as I remember how it used to be:
I walked among the crowds of
worshippers,
leading a great procession to the house
of God,
singing for joy and giving thanks
amid the sound of a great celebration!
- 5 Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again—
my Savior and ⁶my God!
- Now I am deeply discouraged,
but I will remember you—
even from distant Mount Hermon, the
source of the Jordan,
from the land of Mount Mizar.
- 7 I hear the tumult of the raging seas
as your waves and surging tides sweep
over me.
- 8 But each day the LORD pours his unfailing
love upon me,
and through each night I sing his songs,
praying to God who gives me life.
- 9 "O God my rock," I cry,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I wander around in grief,
oppressed by my enemies?"
- 10 Their taunts break my bones.
They scoff, "Where is this
God of yours?"
- 11 Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?

I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again—
my Savior and my God!

P S A L M **43**

- 1 Declare me innocent, O God!
Defend me against these
ungodly people.
Rescue me from these
unjust liars.
- 2 For you are God, my only safe haven.
Why have you tossed me aside?
Why must I wander around in grief,
oppressed by my enemies?
- 3 Send out your light and your truth;
let them guide me.
Let them lead me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you live.
- 4 There I will go to the altar of God,
to God—the source of all my joy.
I will praise you with my harp,
O God, my God!
- 5 Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again—
my Savior and my God!

P S A L M **44**

For the choir director: A psalm* of the descendants
of Korah.

- 1 O God, we have heard it with our own ears—
our ancestors have told us
of all you did in their day,
in days long ago:
- 2 You drove out the pagan nations by your
power
and gave all the land to our ancestors.
You crushed their enemies
and set our ancestors free.
- 3 They did not conquer the land with their
swords;
it was not their own strong arm that gave
them victory.
It was your right hand and strong arm
and the blinding light from your face
that helped them,
for you loved them.
- 4 You are my King and my God.
You command victories for Israel.*
- 5 Only by your power can we push back
our enemies;
only in your name can we trample
our foes.
- 6 I do not trust in my bow;

I do not count on my sword to save me.

- 7 You are the one who gives us victory over
our enemies;
you disgrace those who hate us.
- 8 O God, we give glory to you all day long
and constantly praise your name.

Interlude

- 9 But now you have tossed us aside in
dishonor.
You no longer lead our armies
to battle.
- 10 You make us retreat from our enemies
and allow those who hate us to plunder
our land.
- 11 You have butchered us like sheep
and scattered us among the nations.
- 12 You sold your precious people for a
pittance,
making nothing on the sale.
- 13 You let our neighbors mock us.
We are an object of scorn and derision
to those around us.
- 14 You have made us the butt of their jokes;
they shake their heads at us in scorn.
- 15 We can't escape the constant
humiliation;
shame is written across our faces.
- 16 All we hear are the taunts of our mockers.
All we see are our vengeful enemies.
- 17 All this has happened though we have not
forgotten you.
We have not violated your covenant.
- 18 Our hearts have not deserted you.
We have not strayed from your path.
- 19 Yet you have crushed us in the jackal's
desert home.
You have covered us with darkness and
death.
- 20 If we had forgotten the name of our God
or spread our hands in prayer to
foreign gods,
- 21 God would surely have known it,
for he knows the secrets of every heart.
- 22 But for your sake we are killed every day;
we are being slaughtered like sheep.
- 23 Wake up, O Lord! Why do you sleep?
Get up! Do not reject us forever.
- 24 Why do you look the other way?
Why do you ignore our suffering and
oppression?
- 25 We collapse in the dust,
lying face down in the dirt.
- 26 Rise up! Help us!
Ransom us because of your unfailing
love.

44: TITLE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. 44:4 Hebrew for *Jacob*. The names "Jacob" and "Israel" are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.

P S A L M **45**

For the choir director: A love song to be sung to the tune "Lilies." A psalm of the descendants of Korah.*

- 1 Beautiful words stir my heart.
I will recite a lovely poem about
the king,
for my tongue is like the pen of
a skillful poet.
- 2 You are the most handsome of all.
Gracious words stream from your lips.
God himself has blessed you forever.
- 3 Put on your sword, O mighty warrior!
You are so glorious, so majestic!
- 4 In your majesty, ride out to victory,
defending truth, humility, and justice.
Go forth to perform awe-inspiring deeds!
- 5 Your arrows are sharp, piercing your
enemies' hearts.
The nations fall beneath your feet.
- 6 Your throne, O God,* endures forever
and ever.
You rule with a scepter of justice.
- 7 You love justice and hate evil.
Therefore God, your God, has
anointed you,
pouring out the oil of joy on you more
than on anyone else.
- 8 Myrrh, aloes, and cassia perfume your
robes.
In ivory palaces the music of strings
entertains you.
- 9 Kings' daughters are among your noble
women.
At your right side stands the queen,
wearing jewelry of finest gold from
Ophir!
- 10 Listen to me, O royal daughter; take
to heart what I say.
Forget your people and your family
far away.
- 11 For your royal husband delights in your
beauty;
honor him, for he is your lord.
- 12 The princess of Tyre* will shower you with
gifts.
The wealthy will beg your favor.
- 13 The bride, a princess, looks glorious
in her golden gown.
- 14 In her beautiful robes, she is led
to the king,
accompanied by her bridesmaids.
- 15 What a joyful and enthusiastic procession
as they enter the king's palace!
- 16 Your sons will become kings like their
father.

You will make them rulers over many
lands.

- 17 I will bring honor to your name in every
generation.
Therefore, the nations will praise you
forever and ever.

P S A L M **46**

*For the choir director: A song of the descendants of Korah, to be sung by soprano voices.**

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.
- 2 So we will not fear when earthquakes come
and the mountains crumble into the sea.
- 3 Let the oceans roar and foam.
Let the mountains tremble as the waters
surge!
Interlude
- 4 A river brings joy to the city of our God,
the sacred home of the Most High.
- 5 God dwells in that city; it cannot be
destroyed.
From the very break of day, God will
protect it.
- 6 The nations are in chaos,
and their kingdoms crumble!
God's voice thunders,
and the earth melts!
- 7 The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here
among us;
the God of Israel* is our fortress.
Interlude
- 8 Come, see the glorious works of the LORD:
See how he brings destruction upon the
world.
- 9 He causes wars to end throughout the
earth.
He breaks the bow and snaps the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
- 10 "Be still, and know that I am God!
I will be honored by every nation.
I will be honored throughout
the world."
- 11 The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here
among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress.
Interlude

P S A L M **47**

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

- 1 Come, everyone! Clap your hands!
Shout to God with joyful praise!
- 2 For the LORD Most High is awesome.
He is the great King of all the earth.

45: TITLE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. 45:6 Or *Your divine throne*. 45:12 Hebrew *The daughter of Tyre*. 46: TITLE Hebrew *according to alamothe*. 46:7 Hebrew *of Jacob*; also in 46:11. See note on 44:4.


cornerstones
**IF YOU FALL, ASK GOD TO FORGIVE
YOU AND PURIFY YOUR HEART AND
DESIRES**
Read PSALM 51:7-15

This psalm was written by David after Nathan had informed him of God's judgment against him for his affair with Bathsheba. David had not confessed his sin to God for a full,

miserable year. He writes, "When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat" (Psalm 32:3-4).

Like David, we will be miserable until we confess our sin. But we must also ask God to purify our heart. In the Bible, the heart is an expression that describes the core of who we are. It indicates our will, thoughts, and emotions.

David recognized the evil desires of his heart, and he realized that he could not change them on his own. Only God could fill his heart with pure desires.

If you have already committed adultery, put a stop to that relationship now and ask God for forgiveness. Avoid the situations and relationships that could lead you back down that perilous road. Actively seek to fill your mind and life with things that are spiritually uplifting: "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8). Ultimately, only God can help you get through the trials of sexual temptation.

For the next note on "Purity," turn to p. 1140.

³ He subdues the nations before us,
putting our enemies beneath our feet.

⁴ He chose the Promised Land as our
inheritance,
the proud possession of Jacob's
descendants, whom he loves.

Interlude

⁵ God has ascended with a mighty shout.
The LORD has ascended with trumpets
blaring.

⁶ Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises!

⁷ For God is the King over all the earth.
Praise him with a psalm.*

⁸ God reigns above the nations,
sitting on his holy throne.

⁹ The rulers of the world have gathered
together
with the people of the God of Abraham.
For all the kings of the earth belong to God.
He is highly honored everywhere.

Mount Zion, the holy mountain,*
is the city of the great King!

³ God himself is in Jerusalem's towers,
revealing himself as its defender.

⁴ The kings of the earth joined forces
and advanced against the city.

⁵ But when they saw it, they were stunned;
they were terrified and ran away.

⁶ They were gripped with terror
and writhed in pain like a woman
in labor.

⁷ You destroyed them like the mighty ships
of Tarshish
shattered by a powerful east wind.

⁸ We had heard of the city's glory,
but now we have seen it ourselves—
the city of the LORD of Heaven's Armies.
It is the city of our God;

he will make it safe forever. *Interlude*

⁹ O God, we meditate on your unfailing love
as we worship in your Temple.

¹⁰ As your name deserves, O God,
you will be praised to the ends of the
earth.
Your strong right hand is filled with
victory.

¹¹ Let the people on Mount Zion rejoice.
Let all the towns of Judah be glad
because of your justice.

PSALM 48

A song. A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

¹ How great is the LORD,
how deserving of praise,
in the city of our God,
which sits on his holy mountain!

² It is high and magnificent;
the whole earth rejoices to see it!

47:7 Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. 48:2 Or *Mount Zion, in the far north*; Hebrew reads *Mount Zion, the heights of Zaphon*.

- 12 Go, inspect the city of Jerusalem.*
Walk around and count the many towers.
- 13 Take note of the fortified walls,
and tour all the citadels,
that you may describe them
to future generations.
- 14 For that is what God is like.
He is our God forever and ever,
and he will guide us until we die.

P S A L M 49

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

- 1 Listen to this, all you people!
Pay attention, everyone in the world!
- 2 High and low,
rich and poor—listen!
- 3 For my words are wise,
and my thoughts are filled
with insight.
- 4 I listen carefully to many proverbs
and solve riddles with inspiration
from a harp.
- 5 Why should I fear when trouble comes,
when enemies surround me?
- 6 They trust in their wealth
and boast of great riches.
- 7 Yet they cannot redeem themselves from
death*
by paying a ransom to God.
- 8 Redemption does not come so easily,
for no one can ever pay enough
- 9 to live forever
and never see the grave.
- 10 Those who are wise must finally die,
just like the foolish and senseless,
leaving all their wealth behind.
- 11 The grave is their eternal home,
where they will stay forever.
They may name their estates after
themselves,
- 12 but their fame will not last.
They will die, just like animals.
- 13 This is the fate of fools,
though they are remembered as
being wise.* *Interlude*
- 14 Like sheep, they are led to the grave,*
where death will be their shepherd.
In the morning the godly will rule over
them.
Their bodies will rot in the grave,
far from their grand estates.
- 15 But as for me, God will redeem my life.
He will snatch me from the power
of the grave. *Interlude*

- 16 So don't be dismayed when the wicked
grow rich
and their homes become ever more
splendid.
- 17 For when they die, they take nothing with
them.
Their wealth will not follow them into
the grave.
- 18 In this life they consider themselves
fortunate
and are applauded for their success.
- 19 But they will die like all before them
and never again see the light of day.
- 20 People who boast of their wealth don't
understand;
they will die, just like animals.

P S A L M 50

A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 The LORD, the Mighty One, is God,
and he has spoken;
he has summoned all humanity
from where the sun rises to where it sets.
- 2 From Mount Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines in glorious radiance.
- 3 Our God approaches,
and he is not silent.
Fire devours everything in his way,
and a great storm rages around him.
- 4 He calls on the heavens above and earth
below
to witness the judgment of his people.
- 5 "Bring my faithful people to me—
those who made a covenant with me
by giving sacrifices."
- 6 Then let the heavens proclaim his justice,
for God himself will be the judge. *Interlude*
- 7 "O my people, listen as I speak.
Here are my charges against you,
O Israel:
I am God, your God!
- 8 I have no complaint about your sacrifices
or the burnt offerings you constantly
offer.
- 9 But I do not need the bulls from your barns
or the goats from your pens.
- 10 For all the animals of the forest are mine,
and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.
- 11 I know every bird on the mountains,
and all the animals of the field are mine.
- 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for all the world is mine and everything
in it.
- 13 Do I eat the meat of bulls?
Do I drink the blood of goats?

48:12 Hebrew *Zion*. 49:7 Or *no one can redeem the life of another*. 49:13 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.
49:14 Hebrew *Sheol*; also in 49:14b, 15.

- 14 Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God,
and keep the vows you made to the Most High.
- 15 Then call on me when you are in trouble,
and I will rescue you,
and you will give me glory.”
- 16 But God says to the wicked:
“Why bother reciting my decrees
and pretending to obey my covenant?”
- 17 For you refuse my discipline
and treat my words like trash.
- 18 When you see thieves, you approve of them,
and you spend your time with adulterers.
- 19 Your mouth is filled with wickedness,
and your tongue is full of lies.
- 20 You sit around and slander your brother—
your own mother’s son.
- 21 While you did all this, I remained silent,
and you thought I didn’t care.
But now I will rebuke you,
listing all my charges against you.
- 22 Repent, all of you who forget me,
or I will tear you apart,
and no one will help you.
- 23 But giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly
honors me.
If you keep to my path,
I will reveal to you the salvation
of God.”
- You will be proved right in what you say,
and your judgment against me is just.*
- 5 For I was born a sinner—
yes, from the moment my mother
conceived me.
- 6 But you desire honesty from the womb,*
teaching me wisdom even there.
- 7 Purify me from my sins,* and I will
be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- 8 Oh, give me back my joy again;
you have broken me—
now let me rejoice.
- 9 Don’t keep looking at my sins.
Remove the stain of my guilt.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.
- 11 Do not banish me from your presence,
and don’t take your Holy Spirit* from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.
- 13 Then I will teach your ways to rebels,
and they will return to you.
- 14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God
who saves;
then I will joyfully sing of your
forgiveness.
- 15 Unseal my lips, O Lord,
that my mouth may praise you.
- 16 You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would
offer one.
You do not want a burnt offering.
- 17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.
You will not reject a broken and
repentant heart, O God.
- 18 Look with favor on Zion and help her;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then you will be pleased with sacrifices
offered in the right spirit—
with burnt offerings and whole burnt
offerings.
Then bulls will again be sacrificed
on your altar.

PSALM 51

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,
because of your unending love.
Because of your great compassion,
blot out the stain of my sins.
- 2 Wash me clean from my guilt.
Purify me from my sin.
- 3 For I recognize my rebellion;
it haunts me day and night.
- 4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;
I have done what is evil in your sight.

51:4 Greek version reads *and you will win your case in court*. Compare Rom 3:4. 51:6 *Or from the heart*; Hebrew reads *in the inward parts*. 51:7 Hebrew *Purify me with the hyssop branch*. 51:11 *Or your spirit of holiness*.



off and running

PRAY REGULARLY

Read PSALM 55:16-17

Prayer often seems like an obligation. Some only do it when they need something or at a specific time of day. But once someone opens his or her heart to

Jesus, prayer becomes a thing of joy. Prayer becomes an opportunity to converse with the Creator. And the more we pray, the closer and deeper our relationship

P S A L M **52**

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Doeg the Edomite said to Saul, "David has gone to see Ahimelech."*

- 1 Why do you boast about your crimes, great warrior?
Don't you realize God's justice continues forever?
- 2 All day long you plot destruction.
Your tongue cuts like a sharp razor;
you're an expert at telling lies.
- 3 You love evil more than good
and lies more than truth. *Interlude*
- 4 You love to destroy others with your words,
you liar!
- 5 But God will strike you down once and for all.
He will pull you from your home
and uproot you from the land of the living. *Interlude*
- 6 The righteous will see it and be amazed.
They will laugh and say,
- 7 "Look what happens to mighty warriors
who do not trust in God.
They trust their wealth instead
and grow more and more bold in their wickedness."
- 8 But I am like an olive tree, thriving in the house of God.
I will always trust in God's unfailing love.
- 9 I will praise you forever, O God,
for what you have done.
I will trust in your good name
in the presence of your faithful people.

P S A L M **53**

For the choir director: A meditation; a psalm of David.*

- 1 Only fools say in their hearts,
"There is no God."
They are corrupt, and their actions are evil;
not one of them does good!
- 2 God looks down from heaven
on the entire human race;

52: TITLE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. 53:3 Greek version reads *have become useless*. Compare Rom 3:12. 54: TITLE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

he looks to see if anyone is truly wise,
if anyone seeks God.

- 3 But no, all have turned away;
all have become corrupt.*
No one does good,
not a single one!
- 4 Will those who do evil never learn?
They eat up my people like bread
and wouldn't think of praying to God.
- 5 Terror will grip them,
terror like they have never known before.
God will scatter the bones of your enemies.
You will put them to shame, for God has rejected them.
- 6 Who will come from Mount Zion to rescue Israel?
When God restores his people,
Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel will rejoice.

P S A L M **54**

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "We know where David is hiding." To be accompanied by stringed instruments.*

- 1 Come with great power, O God, and rescue me!
Defend me with your might.
- 2 Listen to my prayer, O God.
Pay attention to my plea.
- 3 For strangers are attacking me;
violent people are trying to kill me.
They care nothing for God. *Interlude*
- 4 But God is my helper.
The Lord keeps me alive!
- 5 May the evil plans of my enemies be turned against them.
Do as you promised and put an end to them.
- 6 I will sacrifice a voluntary offering to you;
I will praise your name, O LORD,
for it is good.
- 7 For you have rescued me from my troubles

with Jesus becomes. As the psalmist suggests, we should pray morning, noon, and night—knowing that God is listening and that he *will* answer.

Prayer will transform your life, and it will also transform your problems. Sometimes it will even eliminate them! For as verse 22 proclaims, "Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall." As a believer, prayer should be a constant practice of devotion, not an occasional pleading of need.

For the next note on "Prayer Time," turn to p. 638.

and helped me to triumph over my enemies.

PSALM 55

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.*

- 1 Listen to my prayer, O God.
Do not ignore my cry for help!
- 2 Please listen and answer me,
for I am overwhelmed by my troubles.
- 3 My enemies shout at me,
making loud and wicked threats.
They bring trouble on me
and angrily hunt me down.
- 4 My heart pounds in my chest.
The terror of death assaults me.
- 5 Fear and trembling overwhelm me,
and I can't stop shaking.
- 6 Oh, that I had wings like a dove;
then I would fly away and rest!
- 7 I would fly far away
to the quiet of the wilderness. *Interlude*
- 8 How quickly I would escape—
far from this wild storm of hatred.
- 9 Confuse them, Lord, and frustrate their plans,
for I see violence and conflict in the city.
- 10 Its walls are patrolled day and night against
invaders,
but the real danger is wickedness within
the city.
- 11 Everything is falling apart;
threats and cheating are rampant in
the streets.
- 12 It is not an enemy who taunts me—
I could bear that.
It is not my foes who so arrogantly
insult me—
I could have hidden from them.
- 13 Instead, it is you—my equal,
my companion and close friend.
- 14 What good fellowship we once enjoyed
as we walked together to the house
of God.
- 15 Let death stalk my enemies;
let the grave* swallow them alive,
for evil makes its home within them.
- 16 But I will call on God,
and the LORD will rescue me.
- 17 Morning, noon, and night
I cry out in my distress,
and the LORD hears my voice.
- 18 He ransoms me and keeps me safe
from the battle waged against me,
though many still oppose me.

- 19 God, who has ruled forever,
will hear me and humble them.

Interlude

- For my enemies refuse to change their ways;
they do not fear God.
- 20 As for my companion, he betrayed his
friends;
he broke his promises.
- 21 His words are as smooth as butter,
but in his heart is war.
His words are as soothing as lotion,
but underneath are daggers!
- 22 Give your burdens to the LORD,
and he will take care of you.
He will not permit the godly to slip
and fall.
- 23 But you, O God, will send the wicked
down to the pit of destruction.
Murderers and liars will die young,
but I am trusting you to save me.

PSALM 56

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time the Philistines seized him in Gath. To be sung to the tune "Dove on Distant Oaks."*

- 1 O God, have mercy on me,
for people are hounding me.
My foes attack me all day long.
- 2 I am constantly hounded by those who
slander me,
and many are boldly attacking me.
- 3 But when I am afraid,
I will put my trust in you.
- 4 I praise God for what he has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?
- 5 They are always twisting what I say;
they spend their days plotting to harm me.
- 6 They come together to spy on me—
watching my every step, eager to kill me.
- 7 Don't let them get away with their
wickedness;
in your anger, O God, bring them down.
- 8 You keep track of all my sorrows.*
You have collected all my tears in your
bottle.
You have recorded each one in your book.
- 9 My enemies will retreat when I call to you
for help.
This I know: God is on my side!
- 10 I praise God for what he has promised;
yes, I praise the LORD for what he has
promised.
- 11 I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?

55: TITILE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.
may be a literary or musical term. 56:8 Or *my wanderings*.

55:15 Hebrew *let Sheol*. 56: TITILE Hebrew *miktam*. This

- ¹² I will fulfill my vows to you, O God,
and will offer a sacrifice of thanks for
your help.
- ¹³ For you have rescued me from death;
you have kept my feet from slipping.
So now I can walk in your presence, O God,
in your life-giving light.

P S A L M **57**

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding
the time he fled from Saul and went into the cave.
To be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!"*

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy!
I look to you for protection.
I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings
until the danger passes by.
- ² I cry out to God Most High,*
to God who will fulfill his purpose for me.
- ³ He will send help from heaven to rescue me,
disgracing those who hound me.

Interlude

My God will send forth his unfailing love
and faithfulness.

- ⁴ I am surrounded by fierce lions
who greedily devour human prey—
whose teeth pierce like spears and arrows,
and whose tongues cut like swords.
- ⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens!
May your glory shine over all the earth.
- ⁶ My enemies have set a trap for me.
I am weary from distress.
They have dug a deep pit in my path,
but they themselves have fallen into it.

Interlude

- ⁷ My heart is confident in you, O God;
my heart is confident.
No wonder I can sing your praises!
- ⁸ Wake up, my heart!
Wake up, O lyre and harp!
I will wake the dawn with my song.
- ⁹ I will thank you, Lord, among all the people.
I will sing your praises among the nations.
- ¹⁰ For your unfailing love is as high as the
heavens.
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
- ¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the highest
heavens.
May your glory shine over all the earth.

P S A L M **58**

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung
to the tune "Do Not Destroy!"*

- ¹ Justice—do you rulers* know the meaning
of the word?

- Do you judge the people fairly?
- ² No! You plot injustice in your hearts.
You spread violence throughout the land.
- ³ These wicked people are born sinners;
even from birth they have lied and
gone their own way.
- ⁴ They spit venom like deadly snakes;
they are like cobras that refuse to listen,
⁵ ignoring the tunes of the snake charmers,
no matter how skillfully they play.
- ⁶ Break off their fangs, O God!
Smash the jaws of these lions, O LORD!
- ⁷ May they disappear like water into thirsty
ground.
Make their weapons useless in their
hands.*
- ⁸ May they be like snails that dissolve into
slime,
like a stillborn child who will never see
the sun.
- ⁹ God will sweep them away, both young
and old,
faster than a pot heats over burning
thorns.
- ¹⁰ The godly will rejoice when they see
injustice avenged.
They will wash their feet in the blood
of the wicked.
- ¹¹ Then at last everyone will say,
"There truly is a reward for those who
live for God;
surely there is a God who judges justly
here on earth."

P S A L M **59**

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding
the time Saul sent soldiers to watch David's house
in order to kill him. To be sung to the tune "Do Not
Destroy!"*

- ¹ Rescue me from my enemies, O God.
Protect me from those who have come
to destroy me.
- ² Rescue me from these criminals;
save me from these murderers.
- ³ They have set an ambush for me.
Fierce enemies are out there waiting,
LORD,
though I have not sinned or offended
them.
- ⁴ I have done nothing wrong,
yet they prepare to attack me.
Wake up! See what is happening and
help me!
- ⁵ O LORD God of Heaven's Armies, the God
of Israel,

57: TITLE Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term. 57:2 Hebrew *Elohim-Elyon*. 58: TITLE Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term. 58:1 Or *you gods*. 58:7 Or *Let them be trodden down and wither like grass*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 59: TITLE Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term.

wake up and punish those hostile nations.
Show no mercy to wicked traitors.

Interlude

- ⁶ They come out at night,
snarling like vicious dogs
as they prowl the streets.
- ⁷ Listen to the filth that comes from their mouths;
their words cut like swords.
“After all, who can hear us?” they sneer.
- ⁸ But LORD, you laugh at them.
You scoff at all the hostile nations.
- ⁹ You are my strength; I wait for you to rescue me,
for you, O God, are my fortress.
- ¹⁰ In his unflinching love, my God will stand with me.
He will let me look down in triumph on all my enemies.
- ¹¹ Don’t kill them, for my people soon forget such lessons;
stagger them with your power, and bring them to their knees,
O Lord our shield.
- ¹² Because of the sinful things they say,
because of the evil that is on their lips,
let them be captured by their pride,
their curses, and their lies.
- ¹³ Destroy them in your anger!
Wipe them out completely!
Then the whole world will know that God reigns in Israel.* *Interlude*
- ¹⁴ My enemies come out at night,
snarling like vicious dogs
as they prowl the streets.
- ¹⁵ They scavenge for food
but go to sleep unsatisfied.*
- ¹⁶ But as for me, I will sing about your power.
Each morning I will sing with joy about your unflinching love.
For you have been my refuge,
a place of safety when I am in distress.
- ¹⁷ O my Strength, to you I sing praises,
for you, O God, are my refuge,
the God who shows me unflinching love.

P S A L M 60

For the choir director: A psalm of David useful for teaching, regarding the time David fought Aram-naharaim and Aram-zobah, and Joab returned and killed 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. To be sung to the tune “Lily of the Testimony.”*

- ¹ You have rejected us, O God, and broken our defenses.

You have been angry with us; now restore us to your favor.

- ² You have shaken our land and split it open.
Seal the cracks, for the land trembles.
- ³ You have been very hard on us,
making us drink wine that sent us reeling.
- ⁴ But you have raised a banner for those who fear you—
a rallying point in the face of attack.

Interlude

- ⁵ Now rescue your beloved people.
Answer and save us by your power.
- ⁶ God has promised this by his holiness*:
“I will divide up Shechem with joy.
I will measure out the valley of Succoth.
- ⁷ Gilead is mine,
and Manasseh, too.
Ephraim, my helmet, will produce my warriors,
and Judah, my scepter, will produce my kings.
- ⁸ But Moab, my washbasin, will become my servant,
and I will wipe my feet on Edom
and shout in triumph over Philistia.”
- ⁹ Who will bring me into the fortified city?
Who will bring me victory over Edom?
- ¹⁰ Have you rejected us, O God?
Will you no longer march with our armies?
- ¹¹ Oh, please help us against our enemies,
for all human help is useless.
- ¹² With God’s help we will do mighty things,
for he will trample down our foes.

P S A L M 61

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

- ¹ O God, listen to my cry!
Hear my prayer!
- ² From the ends of the earth,
I cry to you for help
when my heart is overwhelmed.
Lead me to the towering rock of safety,
- ³ for you are my safe refuge,
a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.
- ⁴ Let me live forever in your sanctuary,
safe beneath the shelter of your wings!
- Interlude*
- ⁵ For you have heard my vows, O God.
You have given me an inheritance
reserved for those who fear your name.

- 6 Add many years to the life of the king!
 May his years span the generations!
- 7 May he reign under God's protection
 forever.
 May your unfailing love and faithfulness
 watch over him.
- 8 Then I will sing praises to your name
 forever
 as I fulfill my vows each day.

P S A L M **62**

For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 I wait quietly before God,
 for my victory comes from him.
- 2 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
 my fortress where I will never
 be shaken.
- 3 So many enemies against one man—
 all of them trying to kill me.
 To them I'm just a broken-down wall
 or a tottering fence.
- 4 They plan to topple me from my high
 position.
 They delight in telling lies about me.
 They praise me to my face
 but curse me in their hearts. *Interlude*
- 5 Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
 for my hope is in him.
- 6 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
 my fortress where I will not be shaken.
- 7 My victory and honor come from God
 alone.
 He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy
 can reach me.
- 8 O my people, trust in him at all times.
 Pour out your heart to him,
 for God is our refuge. *Interlude*
- 9 Common people are as worthless as a puff
 of wind,
 and the powerful are not what they
 appear to be.
 If you weigh them on the scales,
 together they are lighter than a breath
 of air.
- 10 Don't make your living by extortion
 or put your hope in stealing.
 And if your wealth increases,
 don't make it the center
 of your life.
- 11 God has spoken plainly,
 and I have heard it many times:
 Power, O God, belongs to you;
 12 unfailing love, O Lord, is yours.
 Surely you repay all people
 according to what they
 have done.

P S A L M **63**

*A psalm of David, regarding a time when David was
 in the wilderness of Judah.*

- 1 O God, you are my God;
 I earnestly search for you.
 My soul thirsts for you;
 my whole body longs for you
 in this parched and weary land
 where there is no water.
- 2 I have seen you in your sanctuary
 and gazed upon your power and glory.
- 3 Your unfailing love is better than life itself;
 how I praise you!
- 4 I will praise you as long as I live,
 lifting up my hands to you in prayer.
- 5 You satisfy me more than the richest feast.
 I will praise you with songs of joy.
- 6 I lie awake thinking of you,
 meditating on you through the night.
- 7 Because you are my helper,
 I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings.
- 8 I cling to you;
 your strong right hand holds me securely.
- 9 But those plotting to destroy me will come
 to ruin.
 They will go down into the depths of the
 earth.
- 10 They will die by the sword
 and become the food of jackals.
- 11 But the king will rejoice in God.
 All who trust in him will praise him,
 while liars will be silenced.

P S A L M **64**

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 O God, listen to my complaint.
 Protect my life from my enemies' threats.
- 2 Hide me from the plots of this evil mob,
 from this gang of wrongdoers.
- 3 They sharpen their tongues like swords
 and aim their bitter words like arrows.
- 4 They shoot from ambush at the innocent,
 attacking suddenly and fearlessly.
- 5 They encourage each other to do evil
 and plan how to set their traps in secret.
 "Who will ever notice?" they ask.
- 6 As they plot their crimes, they say,
 "We have devised the perfect plan!"
 Yes, the human heart and mind are
 cunning.
- 7 But God himself will shoot them with his
 arrows,
 suddenly striking them down.
- 8 Their own tongues will ruin them,
 and all who see them will shake their
 heads in scorn.

- 9 Then everyone will be afraid;
they will proclaim the mighty acts of God
and realize all the amazing things he
does.
- 10 The godly will rejoice in the LORD
and find shelter in him.
And those who do what is right
will praise him.

P S A L M **65**

For the choir director: A song. A psalm of David.

- 1 What mighty praise, O God,
belongs to you in Zion.
We will fulfill our vows to you,
2 for you answer our prayers.
All of us must come to you.
- 3 Though we are overwhelmed by our sins,
you forgive them all.
- 4 What joy for those you choose to bring
near,
those who live in your holy courts.
What festivities await us
inside your holy Temple.
- 5 You faithfully answer our prayers with
awesome deeds,
O God our savior.
You are the hope of everyone on earth,
even those who sail on distant seas.
- 6 You formed the mountains by your power
and armed yourself with mighty
strength.
- 7 You quieted the raging oceans
with their pounding waves
and silenced the shouting of the nations.
- 8 Those who live at the ends of the earth
stand in awe of your wonders.
From where the sun rises to where it sets,
you inspire shouts of joy.
- 9 You take care of the earth and water it,
making it rich and fertile.
The river of God has plenty of water;
it provides a bountiful harvest of grain,
for you have ordered it so.
- 10 You drench the plowed ground with rain,
melting the clods and leveling the ridges.
You soften the earth with showers
and bless its abundant crops.
- 11 You crown the year with a bountiful
harvest;
even the hard pathways overflow with
abundance.
- 12 The grasslands of the wilderness become a
lush pasture,
and the hillsides blossom with joy.
- 13 The meadows are clothed with flocks
of sheep,

and the valleys are carpeted with grain.
They all shout and sing for joy!

P S A L M **66**

For the choir director: A song. A psalm.

- 1 Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!
2 Sing about the glory of his name!
Tell the world how glorious he is.
- 3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Your enemies cringe before your mighty
power.
- 4 Everything on earth will worship you;
they will sing your praises,
shouting your name in glorious songs."
Interlude
- 5 Come and see what our God has done,
what awesome miracles he performs
for people!
- 6 He made a dry path through the Red Sea,*
and his people went across on foot.
There we rejoiced in him.
- 7 For by his great power he rules forever.
He watches every movement of the
nations;
let no rebel rise in defiance. *Interlude*
- 8 Let the whole world bless our God
and loudly sing his praises.
- 9 Our lives are in his hands,
and he keeps our feet from stumbling.
- 10 You have tested us, O God;
you have purified us like silver.
- 11 You captured us in your net
and laid the burden of slavery on our
backs.
- 12 Then you put a leader over us.*
We went through fire and flood,
but you brought us to a place of great
abundance.
- 13 Now I come to your Temple with burnt
offerings
to fulfill the vows I made to you—
14 yes, the sacred vows that I made
when I was in deep trouble.
- 15 That is why I am sacrificing burnt offerings
to you—
the best of my rams as a pleasing aroma,
and a sacrifice of bulls and male goats.
Interlude
- 16 Come and listen, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what he did for me.
- 17 For I cried out to him for help,
praising him as I spoke.
- 18 If I had not confessed the sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
- 19 But God did listen!

He paid attention to my prayer.

- ²⁰ Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer
or withdraw his unfailing love from me.

P S A L M **67**

*For the choir director: A song. A psalm, to be
accompanied by stringed instruments.*

- ¹ May God be merciful and bless us.
May his face smile with favor on us.
Interlude

- ² May your ways be known throughout the
earth,
your saving power among people
everywhere.

- ³ May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.

- ⁴ Let the whole world sing for joy,
because you govern the nations with
justice
and guide the people of the whole world.
Interlude

- ⁵ May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.

- ⁶ Then the earth will yield its harvests,
and God, our God, will richly bless us.

- ⁷ Yes, God will bless us,
and people all over the world will fear
him.

P S A L M **68**

For the choir director: A song. A psalm of David.

- ¹ Rise up, O God, and scatter your enemies.
Let those who hate God run for their lives.

- ² Blow them away like smoke.
Melt them like wax in a fire.
Let the wicked perish in the presence
of God.

- ³ But let the godly rejoice.
Let them be glad in God's presence.
Let them be filled with joy.

- ⁴ Sing praises to God and to his name!
Sing loud praises to him who rides the
clouds.

His name is the LORD—
rejoice in his presence!

- ⁵ Father to the fatherless, defender of
widows—
this is God, whose dwelling is holy.

- ⁶ God places the lonely in families;
he sets the prisoners free and gives
them joy.

But he makes the rebellious live in
a sun-scorched land.

- ⁷ O God, when you led your people out
from Egypt,

when you marched through the dry
wasteland,
Interlude

- ⁸ the earth trembled, and the heavens poured
down rain

before you, the God of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.

- ⁹ You sent abundant rain, O God,
to refresh the weary land.

- ¹⁰ There your people finally settled,
and with a bountiful harvest, O God,
you provided for your needy people.

- ¹¹ The Lord gives the word,
and a great army* brings
the good news.

- ¹² Enemy kings and their armies flee,
while the women of Israel divide the
plunder.

- ¹³ Even those who lived among the sheepfolds
found treasures—
doves with wings of silver
and feathers of gold.

- ¹⁴ The Almighty scattered the enemy kings
like a blowing snowstorm on Mount
Zalmon.

- ¹⁵ The mountains of Bashan are majestic,
with many peaks stretching high into
the sky.

- ¹⁶ Why do you look with envy, O rugged
mountains,
at Mount Zion, where God has chosen
to live,
where the LORD himself will live forever?

- ¹⁷ Surrounded by unnumbered thousands
of chariots,
the Lord came from Mount Sinai into his
sanctuary.

- ¹⁸ When you ascended to the heights,
you led a crowd of captives.
You received gifts from the people,
even from those who rebelled
against you.
Now the LORD God will live among
us there.

- ¹⁹ Praise the Lord; praise God our savior!
For each day he carries us in his arms.
Interlude

- ²⁰ Our God is a God who saves!
The Sovereign LORD rescues us from
death.

- ²¹ But God will smash the heads of his
enemies,
crushing the skulls of those who love
their guilty ways.

- ²² The Lord says, "I will bring my enemies
down from Bashan;

I will bring them up from the depths
of the sea.

23 You, my people, will wash your feet in their
blood,
and even your dogs will get their share!"

24 Your procession has come into view,
O God—
the procession of my God and King as
he goes into the sanctuary.

25 Singers are in front, musicians behind;
between them are young women playing
tambourines.

26 Praise God, all you people of Israel;
praise the LORD, the source of
Israel's life.

27 Look, the little tribe of Benjamin leads
the way.
Then comes a great throng of rulers
from Judah
and all the rulers of Zebulun and
Naphtali.

28 Summon your might, O God.
Display your power, O God, as you have
in the past.

29 The kings of the earth are bringing tribute
to your Temple in Jerusalem.

30 Rebuke these enemy nations—
these wild animals lurking
in the reeds,
this herd of bulls among the
weaker calves.
Make them bring bars of silver in
humble tribute.
Scatter the nations that delight in war.

31 Let Egypt come with gifts of precious
metals*;
let Ethiopia* bow in submission to God.

32 Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth.
Sing praises to the Lord. *Interlude*

33 Sing to the one who rides across the
ancient heavens,
his mighty voice thundering from
the sky.

34 Tell everyone about God's power.
His majesty shines down on Israel;
his strength is mighty in the heavens.

35 God is awesome in his sanctuary.
The God of Israel gives power and
strength to his people.

Praise be to God!

PSALM **69**

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung
to the tune "Lilies."*

1 Save me, O God,
for the floodwaters are up to my neck.

68:31a Or of rich cloth. 68:31b Hebrew Cush.

2 Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire;
I can't find a foothold.
I am in deep water,
and the floods overwhelm me.

3 I am exhausted from crying for help;
my throat is parched.
My eyes are swollen with weeping,
waiting for my God to help me.

4 Those who hate me without cause
outnumber the hairs on my head.
Many enemies try to destroy me with lies,
demanding that I give back what I didn't
steal.

5 O God, you know how foolish I am;
my sins cannot be hidden from you.

6 Don't let those who trust in you be ashamed
because of me,
O Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies.
Don't let me cause them to be humiliated,
O God of Israel.

7 For I endure insults for your sake;
humiliation is written all over my face.

8 Even my own brothers pretend they don't
know me;
they treat me like a stranger.

9 Passion for your house has consumed me,
and the insults of those who insult you
have fallen on me.

10 When I weep and fast,
they scoff at me.

11 When I dress in burlap to show sorrow,
they make fun of me.

12 I am the favorite topic of town gossip,
and all the drunks sing about me.

13 But I keep praying to you, LORD,
hoping this time you will show
me favor.
In your unfailing love, O God,
answer my prayer with your sure
salvation.

14 Rescue me from the mud;
don't let me sink any deeper!
Save me from those who hate me,
and pull me from these deep waters.

15 Don't let the floods overwhelm me,
or the deep waters swallow me,
or the pit of death devour me.

16 Answer my prayers, O LORD,
for your unfailing love is wonderful.
Take care of me,
for your mercy is so plentiful.

17 Don't hide from your servant;
answer me quickly, for I am in deep
trouble!

18 Come and redeem me;
free me from my enemies.

- 19 You know of my shame, scorn, and disgrace.
You see all that my enemies are doing.
- 20 Their insults have broken my heart,
and I am in despair.
If only one person would show some pity;
if only one would turn and comfort me.
- 21 But instead, they give me poison* for food;
they offer me sour wine for my thirst.
- 22 Let the bountiful table set before them
become a snare
and their prosperity become a trap.*
- 23 Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see,
and make their bodies shake
continually.*
- 24 Pour out your fury on them;
consume them with your
burning anger.
- 25 Let their homes become desolate
and their tents be deserted.
- 26 To the one you have punished, they add
insult to injury;
they add to the pain of those you
have hurt.
- 27 Pile their sins up high,
and don't let them go free.
- 28 Erase their names from the Book of Life;
don't let them be counted among the
righteous.
- 29 I am suffering and in pain.
Rescue me, O God, by your
saving power.
- 30 Then I will praise God's name with singing,
and I will honor him with thanksgiving.
- 31 For this will please the LORD more than
sacrificing cattle,
more than presenting a bull with its
horns and hooves.
- 32 The humble will see their God at work and
be glad.
Let all who seek God's help be
encouraged.
- 33 For the LORD hears the cries of the needy;
he does not despise his imprisoned
people.
- 34 Praise him, O heaven and earth,
the seas and all that move in them.
- 35 For God will save Jerusalem*
and rebuild the towns of Judah.
His people will live there
and settle in their own land.
- 36 The descendants of those who obey him
will inherit the land,
and those who love him will live there
in safety.

P S A L M **70**

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, asking
God to remember him.*

- 1 Please, God, rescue me!
Come quickly, LORD, and help me.
- 2 May those who try to kill me
be humiliated and put to shame.
May those who take delight in my trouble
be turned back in disgrace.
- 3 Let them be horrified by their shame,
for they said, "Aha! We've got him now!"
- 4 But may all who search for you
be filled with joy and gladness in you.
May those who love your salvation
repeatedly shout, "God is great!"
- 5 But as for me, I am poor and needy;
please hurry to my aid, O God.
You are my helper and my savior;
O LORD, do not delay.

P S A L M **71**

- 1 O LORD, I have come to you for protection;
don't let me be disgraced.
- 2 Save me and rescue me,
for you do what is right.
Turn your ear to listen to me,
and set me free.
- 3 Be my rock of safety
where I can always hide.
Give the order to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
- 4 My God, rescue me from the power of the
wicked,
from the clutches of cruel oppressors.
- 5 O Lord, you alone are my hope.
I've trusted you, O LORD, from childhood.
- 6 Yes, you have been with me from birth;
from my mother's womb you have cared
for me.
No wonder I am always praising you!
- 7 My life is an example to many,
because you have been my strength and
protection.
- 8 That is why I can never stop praising you;
I declare your glory all day long.
- 9 And now, in my old age, don't set me aside.
Don't abandon me when my strength
is failing.
- 10 For my enemies are whispering against me.
They are plotting together to kill me.
- 11 They say, "God has abandoned him.
Let's go and get him,
for no one will help him now."
- 12 O God, don't stay away.
My God, please hurry to help me.

69:21 Or *gall*. 69:22 Greek version reads *Let their bountiful table set before them become a snare, / a trap that makes them think all is well. / Let their blessings cause them to stumble, / and let them get what they deserve*. Compare Rom 11:9.
69:23 Greek version reads *and let their backs be bent forever*. Compare Rom 11:10. 69:35 Hebrew *Zion*.

- 13 Bring disgrace and destruction on my accusers.
Humiliate and shame those who want to harm me.
- 14 But I will keep on hoping for your help;
I will praise you more and more.
- 15 I will tell everyone about your righteousness.
All day long I will proclaim your saving power,
though I am not skilled with words.*
- 16 I will praise your mighty deeds, O Sovereign LORD.
I will tell everyone that you alone are just.
- 17 O God, you have taught me from my earliest childhood,
and I constantly tell others about the wonderful things you do.
- 18 Now that I am old and gray,
do not abandon me, O God.
Let me proclaim your power to this new generation,
your mighty miracles to all who come after me.
- 19 Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the highest heavens.
You have done such wonderful things.
Who can compare with you, O God?
- 20 You have allowed me to suffer much hardship,
but you will restore me to life again
and lift me up from the depths of the earth.
- 21 You will restore me to even greater honor
and comfort me once again.
- 22 Then I will praise you with music on the harp,
because you are faithful to your promises, O my God.
I will sing praises to you with a lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.
- 23 I will shout for joy and sing your praises,
for you have ransomed me.
- 24 I will tell about your righteous deeds
all day long,
for everyone who tried to hurt me
has been shamed and humiliated.
- 4 Help him to defend the poor,
to rescue the children of the needy,
and to crush their oppressors.
- 5 May they fear you* as long as the sun shines,
as long as the moon remains in the sky.
Yes, forever!
- 6 May the king's rule be refreshing like spring rain on freshly cut grass,
like the showers that water the earth.
- 7 May all the godly flourish during his reign.
May there be abundant prosperity until the moon is no more.
- 8 May he reign from sea to sea,
and from the Euphrates River* to the ends of the earth.
- 9 Desert nomads will bow before him;
his enemies will fall before him in the dust.
- 10 The western kings of Tarshish and other distant lands
will bring him tribute.
The eastern kings of Sheba and Seba
will bring him gifts.
- 11 All kings will bow before him,
and all nations will serve him.
- 12 He will rescue the poor when they cry to him;
he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.
- 13 He feels pity for the weak and the needy,
and he will rescue them.
- 14 He will redeem them from oppression and violence,
for their lives are precious to him.
- 15 Long live the king!
May the gold of Sheba be given to him.
May the people always pray for him
and bless him all day long.
- 16 May there be abundant grain throughout the land,
flourishing even on the hilltops.
May the fruit trees flourish like the trees of Lebanon,
and may the people thrive like grass in a field.
- 17 May the king's name endure forever;
may it continue as long as the sun shines.
May all nations be blessed through him
and bring him praise.
- 18 Praise the LORD God, the God of Israel,
who alone does such wonderful things.
- 19 Praise his glorious name forever!
Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and amen!
- 20 (This ends the prayers of David son of Jesse.)

P S A L M **72***A psalm of Solomon.*

- 1 Give your love of justice to the king, O God,
and righteousness to the king's son.
- 2 Help him judge your people in the right way;
let the poor always be treated fairly.
- 3 May the mountains yield prosperity for all,
and may the hills be fruitful.
- 71:15 Or *though I cannot count it.* 72:5 Greek version reads *May they endure.* 72:8 Hebrew *the river.*

BOOK THREE (Psalms 73–89)

P S A L M **73**
A psalm of Asaph.

- ¹ Truly God is good to Israel,
to those whose hearts are pure.
- ² But as for me, I almost lost my footing.
My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.
- ³ For I envied the proud
when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.
- ⁴ They seem to live such painless lives;
their bodies are so healthy and strong.
- ⁵ They don't have troubles like other people;
they're not plagued with problems like everyone else.
- ⁶ They wear pride like a jeweled necklace
and clothe themselves with cruelty.
- ⁷ These fat cats have everything
their hearts could ever wish for!
- ⁸ They scoff and speak only evil;
in their pride they seek to crush others.
- ⁹ They boast against the very heavens,
and their words strut throughout the earth.
- ¹⁰ And so the people are dismayed and confused,
drinking in all their words.
- ¹¹ "What does God know?" they ask.
"Does the Most High even know what's happening?"
- ¹² Look at these wicked people—
enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.
- ¹³ Did I keep my heart pure for nothing?
Did I keep myself innocent for no reason?
- ¹⁴ I get nothing but trouble all day long;
every morning brings me pain.
- ¹⁵ If I had really spoken this way to others,
I would have been a traitor to your people.
- ¹⁶ So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper.
But what a difficult task it is!
- ¹⁷ Then I went into your sanctuary, O God,
and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked.
- ¹⁸ Truly, you put them on a slippery path
and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction.
- ¹⁹ In an instant they are destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors.
- ²⁰ When you arise, O Lord,
you will laugh at their silly ideas

as a person laughs at dreams in the morning.

- ²¹ Then I realized that my heart was bitter,
and I was all torn up inside.
- ²² I was so foolish and ignorant—
I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.
- ²³ Yet I still belong to you;
you hold my right hand.
- ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
leading me to a glorious destiny.
- ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
I desire you more than anything on earth.
- ²⁶ My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,
but God remains the strength of my heart;
he is mine forever.
- ²⁷ Those who desert him will perish,
for you destroy those who abandon you.
- ²⁸ But as for me, how good it is to be near God!
I have made the Sovereign LORD my shelter,
and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.

P S A L M **74**
A psalm of Asaph.*

- ¹ O God, why have you rejected us so long?
Why is your anger so intense against the sheep of your own pasture?
- ² Remember that we are the people you chose long ago,
the tribe you redeemed as your own special possession!
And remember Jerusalem,* your home here on earth.
- ³ Walk through the awful ruins of the city;
see how the enemy has destroyed your sanctuary.
- ⁴ There your enemies shouted their victorious battle cries;
there they set up their battle standards.
- ⁵ They swung their axes
like woodcutters in a forest.
- ⁶ With axes and picks,
they smashed the carved paneling.
- ⁷ They burned your sanctuary to the ground.
They defiled the place that bears your name.
- ⁸ Then they thought, "Let's destroy everything!"
So they burned down all the places where God was worshiped.

- 9 We no longer see your miraculous signs.
All the prophets are gone,
and no one can tell us when
it will end.
- 10 How long, O God, will you allow our
enemies to insult you?
Will you let them dishonor your name
forever?
- 11 Why do you hold back your strong right
hand?
Unleash your powerful fist and destroy
them.
- 12 You, O God, are my king from ages past,
bringing salvation to the earth.
- 13 You split the sea by your strength
and smashed the heads of the sea
monsters.
- 14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan*
and let the desert animals eat him.
- 15 You caused the springs and streams
to gush forth,
and you dried up rivers that never
run dry.
- 16 Both day and night belong to you;
you made the starlight* and the sun.
- 17 You set the boundaries of the earth,
and you made both summer and winter.
- 18 See how these enemies insult you, LORD.
A foolish nation has dishonored your
name.
- 19 Don't let these wild beasts destroy your
turtledoves.
Don't forget your suffering people
forever.
- 20 Remember your covenant promises,
for the land is full of darkness and
violence!
- 21 Don't let the downtrodden be humiliated
again.
Instead, let the poor and needy praise
your name.
- 22 Arise, O God, and defend your cause.
Remember how these fools insult you all
day long.
- 23 Don't overlook what your enemies have said
or their growing uproar.

PSALM **75**

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph. A song to be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!"

- 1 We thank you, O God!
We give thanks because you are near.
People everywhere tell of your wonderful
deeds.

- 2 God says, "At the time I have planned,
I will bring justice against the wicked.
- 3 When the earth quakes and its people live
in turmoil,
I am the one who keeps its foundations
firm. *Interlude*
- 4 "I warned the proud, 'Stop your boasting!'
I told the wicked, 'Don't raise your fists!'
- 5 Don't raise your fists in defiance at the
heavens
or speak with such arrogance."
6 For no one on earth—from east or west,
or even from the wilderness—
should raise a defiant fist.*
- 7 It is God alone who judges;
he decides who will rise and who will fall.
- 8 For the LORD holds a cup in his hand
that is full of foaming wine mixed with
spices.
He pours out the wine in judgment,
and all the wicked must drink it,
draining it to the dregs.
- 9 But as for me, I will always proclaim what
God has done;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
- 10 For God says, "I will break the strength of
the wicked,
but I will increase the power of the godly."

PSALM **76**

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph. A song to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

- 1 God is honored in Judah;
his name is great in Israel.
- 2 Jerusalem* is where he lives;
Mount Zion is his home.
- 3 There he has broken the fiery arrows of the
enemy,
the shields and swords and weapons
of war. *Interlude*
- 4 You are glorious and more majestic
than the everlasting mountains.*
- 5 Our boldest enemies have been plundered.
They lie before us in the sleep of death.
No warrior could lift a hand against us.
- 6 At the blast of your breath, O God of Jacob,
their horses and chariots lay still.
- 7 No wonder you are greatly feared!
Who can stand before you when your
anger explodes?
- 8 From heaven you sentenced your enemies;
the earth trembled and stood silent
before you.

74:14 The identification of Leviathan is disputed, ranging from an earthly creature to a mythical sea monster in ancient literature. 74:16 Or moon; Hebrew reads light. 75:6 Hebrew should lift. 76:2 Hebrew Salem, another name for Jerusalem. 76:4 As in Greek version; Hebrew reads than mountains filled with beasts of prey.

- 9 You stand up to judge those who do evil,
O God,
and to rescue the oppressed of the earth.
Interlude
- 10 Human defiance only enhances your glory,
for you use it as a weapon.*
- 11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and keep
them.
Let everyone bring tribute to the
Awesome One.
- 12 For he breaks the pride of princes,
and the kings of the earth fear him.

P S A L M **77**

For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 I cry out to God; yes, I shout.
Oh, that God would listen to me!
- 2 When I was in deep trouble,
I searched for the Lord.
All night long I prayed, with hands lifted
toward heaven,
but my soul was not comforted.
- 3 I think of God, and I moan,
overwhelmed with longing for his help.
Interlude
- 4 You don't let me sleep.
I am too distressed even to pray!
- 5 I think of the good old days,
long since ended,
6 when my nights were filled with joyful
songs.
I search my soul and ponder the
difference now.
- 7 Has the Lord rejected me forever?
Will he never again be kind to me?
- 8 Is his unending love gone forever?
Have his promises permanently failed?
- 9 Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he slammed the door on his
compassion?
Interlude
- 10 And I said, "This is my fate;
the Most High has turned his hand
against me."
- 11 But then I recall all you have done,
O LORD;
I remember your wonderful deeds
of long ago.
- 12 They are constantly in my thoughts.
I cannot stop thinking about your mighty
works.
- 13 O God, your ways are holy.
Is there any god as mighty as you?
- 14 You are the God of great wonders!
You demonstrate your awesome power
among the nations.

- 15 By your strong arm, you redeemed your
people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
Interlude
- 16 When the Red Sea* saw you, O God,
its waters looked and trembled!
The sea quaked to its very depths.
- 17 The clouds poured down rain;
the thunder rumbled in the sky.
Your arrows of lightning flashed.
- 18 Your thunder roared from the whirlwind;
the lightning lit up the world!
The earth trembled and shook.
- 19 Your road led through the sea,
your pathway through the mighty
waters—
a pathway no one knew was there!
- 20 You led your people along that road like
a flock of sheep,
with Moses and Aaron as their
shepherds.

P S A L M **78**

A psalm of Asaph.*

- 1 O my people, listen to my instructions.
Open your ears to what I am saying,
2 for I will speak to you in a parable.
I will teach you hidden lessons from our
past—
- 3 stories we have heard and known,
stories our ancestors handed down to us.
- 4 We will not hide these truths from our
children;
we will tell the next generation
about the glorious deeds of the LORD,
about his power and his mighty
wonders.
- 5 For he issued his laws to Jacob;
he gave his instructions to Israel.
He commanded our ancestors
to teach them to their children,
6 so the next generation might know them—
even the children not yet born—
and they in turn will teach their own
children.
- 7 So each generation should set its hope
anew on God,
not forgetting his glorious miracles
and obeying his commands.
- 8 Then they will not be like their ancestors—
stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful,
refusing to give their hearts to God.
- 9 The warriors of Ephraim, though armed
with bows,
turned their backs and fled on the day
of battle.

76:10 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 77:16 Hebrew *the waters*. 78:TITLE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

- 10 They did not keep God's covenant
and refused to live by his instructions.
- 11 They forgot what he had done—
the great wonders he had shown them,
- 12 the miracles he did for their ancestors
on the plain of Zoan in the land of Egypt.
- 13 For he divided the sea and led them
through,
making the water stand up like walls!
- 14 In the daytime he led them by a cloud,
and all night by a pillar of fire.
- 15 He split open the rocks in the wilderness
to give them water, as from a gushing
spring
- 16 He made streams pour from the rock,
making the waters flow down like a river!
- 17 Yet they kept on sinning against him,
rebellng against the Most High in the
desert.
- 18 They stubbornly tested God in their hearts,
demanding the foods they craved.
- 19 They even spoke against God himself,
saying,
"God can't give us food in the wilderness.
- 20 Yes, he can strike a rock so water gushes out,
but he can't give his people bread and
meat."
- 21 When the LORD heard them, he was
furious.
The fire of his wrath burned against
Jacob.
Yes, his anger rose against Israel,
22 for they did not believe God
or trust him to care for them.
- 23 But he commanded the skies to open;
he opened the doors of heaven.
- 24 He rained down manna for them to eat;
he gave them bread from heaven.
- 25 They ate the food of angels!
God gave them all they could hold.
- 26 He released the east wind in the heavens
and guided the south wind by his mighty
power.
- 27 He rained down meat as thick as dust—
birds as plentiful as the sand on the
seashore!
- 28 He caused the birds to fall within their
camp
and all around their tents.
- 29 The people ate their fill.
He gave them what they craved.
- 30 But before they satisfied their craving,
while the meat was yet in their mouths,
31 the anger of God rose against them,
and he killed their strongest men.
He struck down the finest of Israel's
young men.
- 32 But in spite of this, the people kept sinning.
Despite his wonders, they refused to
trust him.
- 33 So he ended their lives in failure,
their years in terror.
- 34 When God began killing them,
they finally sought him.
They repented and took God seriously.
- 35 Then they remembered that God was their
rock,
that God Most High* was their
redeemer.
- 36 But all they gave him was lip service;
they lied to him with their tongues.
- 37 Their hearts were not loyal to him.
They did not keep his covenant.
- 38 Yet he was merciful and forgave their sins
and did not destroy them all.
Many times he held back his anger
and did not unleash his fury!
- 39 For he remembered that they were merely
mortal,
gone like a breath of wind that never
returns.
- 40 Oh, how often they rebelled against him
in the wilderness
and grieved his heart in that dry
wasteland.
- 41 Again and again they tested God's patience
and provoked the Holy One of Israel.
- 42 They did not remember his power
and how he rescued them from their
enemies.
- 43 They did not remember his miraculous
signs in Egypt,
his wonders on the plain of Zoan.
- 44 For he turned their rivers into blood,
so no one could drink from the streams.
- 45 He sent vast swarms of flies to consume
them
and hordes of frogs to ruin them.
- 46 He gave their crops to caterpillars;
their harvest was consumed by locusts.
- 47 He destroyed their grapevines with hail
and shattered their sycamore-figs with
sleet.
- 48 He abandoned their cattle to the hail,
their livestock to bolts of lightning.
- 49 He loosed on them his fierce anger—
all his fury, rage, and hostility.
He dispatched against them
a band of destroying angels.
- 50 He turned his anger against them;
he did not spare the Egyptians' lives
but ravaged them with the plague.
- 51 He killed the oldest son in each Egyptian
family,

- the flower of youth throughout the land of Egypt.*
- 52 But he led his own people like a flock of sheep,
guiding them safely through the wilderness.
- 53 He kept them safe so they were not afraid;
but the sea covered their enemies.
- 54 He brought them to the border of his holy land,
to this land of hills he had won for them.
- 55 He drove out the nations before them;
he gave them their inheritance by lot.
He settled the tribes of Israel into their homes.
- 56 But they kept testing and rebelling against God Most High.
They did not obey his laws.
- 57 They turned back and were as faithless as their parents.
They were as undependable as a crooked bow.
- 58 They angered God by building shrines to other gods;
they made him jealous with their idols.
- 59 When God heard them, he was very angry,
and he completely rejected Israel.
- 60 Then he abandoned his dwelling at Shiloh,
the Tabernacle where he had lived among the people.
- 61 He allowed the Ark of his might to be captured;
he surrendered his glory into enemy hands.
- 62 He gave his people over to be butchered by the sword,
because he was so angry with his own people—his special possession.
- 63 Their young men were killed by fire;
their young women died before singing their wedding songs.
- 64 Their priests were slaughtered,
and their widows could not mourn their deaths.
- 65 Then the Lord rose up as though waking from sleep,
like a warrior aroused from a drunken stupor.
- 66 He routed his enemies
and sent them to eternal shame.
- 67 But he rejected Joseph's descendants;
he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.
- 68 He chose instead the tribe of Judah,
and Mount Zion, which he loved.
- 69 There he built his sanctuary as high as the heavens,
as solid and enduring as the earth.
- 70 He chose his servant David,
calling him from the sheep pens.
- 71 He took David from tending the ewes and lambs
and made him the shepherd of Jacob's descendants—
God's own people, Israel.
- 72 He cared for them with a true heart
and led them with skillful hands.

P S A L M 79

A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, pagan nations have conquered your land,
your special possession.
They have defiled your holy Temple
and made Jerusalem a heap of ruins.
- 2 They have left the bodies of your servants
as food for the birds of heaven.
The flesh of your godly ones
has become food for the wild animals.
- 3 Blood has flowed like water all around Jerusalem;
no one is left to bury the dead.
- 4 We are mocked by our neighbors,
an object of scorn and derision to those around us.
- 5 O LORD, how long will you be angry with us?
Forever?
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?
- 6 Pour out your wrath on the nations that
refuse to acknowledge you—
on kingdoms that do not call upon your name.
- 7 For they have devoured your people Israel,*
making the land a desolate wilderness.
- 8 Do not hold us guilty for the sins of our ancestors!
Let your compassion quickly meet our needs,
for we are on the brink of despair.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation!
Help us for the glory of your name.
Save us and forgive our sins
for the honor of your name.
- 10 Why should pagan nations be allowed to scoff,
asking, "Where is their God?"
Show us your vengeance against the nations,
for they have spilled the blood of your servants.
- 11 Listen to the moaning of the prisoners.
Demonstrate your great power by saving those condemned to die.

- 12 O Lord, pay back our neighbors seven times for the scorn they have hurled at you.
 13 Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will thank you forever and ever, praising your greatness from generation to generation.

P S A L M **80**

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be sung to the tune "Lilies of the Covenant."

- 1 Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph's descendants like a flock.
 O God, enthroned above the cherubim, display your radiant glory
 2 to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Show us your mighty power. Come to rescue us!
 3 Turn us again to yourself, O God. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.
 4 O LORD God of Heaven's Armies, how long will you be angry with our prayers?
 5 You have fed us with sorrow and made us drink tears by the bucketful.
 6 You have made us the scorn* of neighboring nations. Our enemies treat us as a joke.
 7 Turn us again to yourself, O God of Heaven's Armies. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.
 8 You brought us from Egypt like a grapevine; you drove away the pagan nations and transplanted us into your land.
 9 You cleared the ground for us, and we took root and filled the land.
 10 Our shade covered the mountains; our branches covered the mighty cedars.
 11 We spread our branches west to the Mediterranean Sea; our shoots spread east to the Euphrates River.*
 12 But now, why have you broken down our walls so that all who pass by may steal our fruit?
 13 The wild boar from the forest devours it, and the wild animals feed on it.
 14 Come back, we beg you, O God of Heaven's Armies. Look down from heaven and see our plight.

- Take care of this grapevine
 15 that you yourself have planted, this son you have raised for yourself.
 16 For we are chopped up and burned by our enemies. May they perish at the sight of your frown.
 17 Strengthen the man you love, the son of your choice.
 18 Then we will never abandon you again. Revive us so we can call on your name once more.
 19 Turn us again to yourself, O LORD God of Heaven's Armies. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

P S A L M **81**

*For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument.**

- 1 Sing praises to God, our strength. Sing to the God of Jacob.
 2 Sing! Beat the tambourine. Play the sweet lyre and the harp.
 3 Blow the ram's horn at new moon, and again at full moon to call a festival!
 4 For this is required by the decrees of Israel; it is a regulation of the God of Jacob.
 5 He made it a law for Israel* when he attacked Egypt to set us free.
 I heard an unknown voice say,
 6 "Now I will take the load from your shoulders; I will free your hands from their heavy tasks.
 7 You cried to me in trouble, and I saved you; I answered out of the thundercloud and tested your faith when there was no water at Meribah. *Interlude*
 8 "Listen to me, O my people, while I give you stern warnings. O Israel, if you would only listen to me!
 9 You must never have a foreign god; you must not bow down before a false god.
 10 For it was I, the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it with good things.
 11 "But no, my people wouldn't listen. Israel did not want me around.
 12 So I let them follow their own stubborn desires, living according to their own ideas.

- ¹³ Oh, that my people would listen to me!
Oh, that Israel would follow me, walking
in my paths!
- ¹⁴ How quickly I would then subdue their
enemies!
How soon my hands would be upon
their foes!
- ¹⁵ Those who hate the LORD would cringe
before him;
they would be doomed forever.
- ¹⁶ But I would feed you with the finest wheat.
I would satisfy you with wild honey from
the rock."

P S A L M **82**
A psalm of Asaph.

- ¹ God presides over heaven's court;
he pronounces judgment on the heavenly
beings:
- ² "How long will you hand down unjust
decisions
by favoring the wicked?" *Interlude*
- ³ "Give justice to the poor and the orphan;
uphold the rights of the oppressed and
the destitute.
- ⁴ Rescue the poor and helpless;
deliver them from the grasp of evil
people.
- ⁵ But these oppressors know nothing;
they are so ignorant!
They wander about in darkness,
while the whole world is shaken
to the core.
- ⁶ I say, 'You are gods;
you are all children of the Most High.
- ⁷ But you will die like mere mortals
and fall like every other ruler.'"
- ⁸ Rise up, O God, and judge the earth,
for all the nations belong to you.

P S A L M **83**
A song. A psalm of Asaph.

- ¹ O God, do not be silent!
Do not be deaf.
Do not be quiet, O God.
- ² Don't you hear the uproar of your enemies?
Don't you see that your arrogant enemies
are rising up?
- ³ They devise crafty schemes against your
people;
they conspire against your precious ones.
- ⁴ "Come," they say, "let us wipe out Israel
as a nation.
We will destroy the very memory of its
existence."
- ⁵ Yes, this was their unanimous decision.

- They signed a treaty as allies against you—
⁶ these Edomites and Ishmaelites;
Moabites and Hagrites;
⁷ Gebalites, Ammonites, and Amalekites;
and people from Philistia and Tyre.
⁸ Assyria has joined them, too,
and is allied with the descendants of Lot.
Interlude

- ⁹ Do to them as you did to the Midianites
and as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the
Kishon River.
- ¹⁰ They were destroyed at Endor,
and their decaying corpses fertilized
the soil.
- ¹¹ Let their mighty nobles die as Oreb and
Zeeb did.
Let all their princes die like Zebah and
Zalmunna,
- ¹² for they said, "Let us seize for our own use
these pasturelands of God!"
- ¹³ O my God, scatter them like tumbleweed,
like chaff before the wind!
- ¹⁴ As a fire burns a forest
and as a flame sets mountains ablaze,
¹⁵ chase them with your fierce storm;
terrify them with your tempest.
- ¹⁶ Utterly disgrace them
until they submit to your name, O LORD.
- ¹⁷ Let them be ashamed and terrified forever.
Let them die in disgrace.
- ¹⁸ Then they will learn that you alone are
called the LORD,
that you alone are the Most High,
supreme over all the earth.

P S A L M **84**
*For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants
of Korah, to be accompanied by a stringed
instrument.**

- ¹ How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of Heaven's Armies.
- ² I long, yes, I faint with longing
to enter the courts of the LORD.
With my whole being, body and soul,
I will shout joyfully to the living God.
- ³ Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow builds her nest and
raises her young
at a place near your altar,
O LORD of Heaven's Armies, my King and
my God!
- ⁴ What joy for those who can live in your
house,
always singing your praises. *Interlude*
- ⁵ What joy for those whose strength comes
from the LORD,

who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

- ⁶ When they walk through the Valley of Weeping,* it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings.
- ⁷ They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem.*
- ⁸ O LORD God of Heaven's Armies, hear my prayer.
Listen, O God of Jacob. *Interlude*
- ⁹ O God, look with favor upon the king, our shield!
Show favor to the one you have anointed.
- ¹⁰ A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked.
- ¹¹ For the LORD God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The LORD will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.
- ¹² O LORD of Heaven's Armies, what joy for those who trust in you.

PSALM 85

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

- ¹ LORD, you poured out blessings on your land!
You restored the fortunes of Israel.*
- ² You forgave the guilt of your people— yes, you covered all their sins. *Interlude*
- ³ You held back your fury.
You kept back your blazing anger.
- ⁴ Now restore us again, O God of our salvation. Put aside your anger against us once more.
- ⁵ Will you be angry with us always? Will you prolong your wrath to all generations?
- ⁶ Won't you revive us again, so your people can rejoice in you?
- ⁷ Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.
- ⁸ I listen carefully to what God the LORD is saying, for he speaks peace to his faithful people.

But let them not return to their foolish ways.

- ⁹ Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, so our land will be filled with his glory.
- ¹⁰ Unfailing love and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed!
- ¹¹ Truth springs up from the earth, and righteousness smiles down from heaven.
- ¹² Yes, the LORD pours down his blessings. Our land will yield its bountiful harvest.
- ¹³ Righteousness goes as a herald before him, preparing the way for his steps.

PSALM 86

A prayer of David.

- ¹ Bend down, O LORD, and hear my prayer; answer me, for I need your help.
- ² Protect me, for I am devoted to you. Save me, for I serve you and trust you. You are my God.
- ³ Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am calling on you constantly.
- ⁴ Give me happiness, O Lord, for I give myself to you.
- ⁵ O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help.
- ⁶ Listen closely to my prayer, O LORD; hear my urgent cry.
- ⁷ I will call to you whenever I'm in trouble, and you will answer me.
- ⁸ No pagan god is like you, O Lord. None can do what you do!
- ⁹ All the nations you made will come and bow before you, Lord; they will praise your holy name.
- ¹⁰ For you are great and perform wonderful deeds. You alone are God.
- ¹¹ Teach me your ways, O LORD, that I may live according to your truth! Grant me purity of heart, so that I may honor you.
- ¹² With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give glory to your name forever,
- ¹³ for your love for me is very great. You have rescued me from the depths of death.*
- ¹⁴ O God, insolent people rise up against me; a violent gang is trying to kill me. You mean nothing to them.

- 15 But you, O Lord,
are a God of compassion and mercy,
slow to get angry
and filled with unfailing love and
faithfulness.
- 16 Look down and have mercy on me.
Give your strength to your servant;
save me, the son of your servant.
- 17 Send me a sign of your favor.
Then those who hate me will be put to
shame,
for you, O LORD, help and comfort me.

P S A L M **87**
A song. A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

- 1 On the holy mountain
stands the city founded by the LORD.
- 2 He loves the city of Jerusalem
more than any other city in Israel.*
- 3 O city of God,
what glorious things are said of you!
Interlude
- 4 I will count Egypt* and Babylon among
those who know me—
also Philistia and Tyre, and even distant
Ethiopia.*
They have all become citizens of
Jerusalem!
- 5 Regarding Jerusalem* it will be said,
“Everyone enjoys the rights of
citizenship there.”
And the Most High will personally bless
this city.
- 6 When the LORD registers the nations, he
will say,
“They have all become citizens of
Jerusalem.” *Interlude*
- 7 The people will play flutes* and sing,
“The source of my life springs from
Jerusalem!”

P S A L M **88**
For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah. A song to be sung to the tune “The Suffering of Affliction.” A psalm of Heman the Ezrahite.*

- 1 O LORD, God of my salvation,
I cry out to you by day.
I come to you at night.
- 2 Now hear my prayer;
listen to my cry.
- 3 For my life is full of troubles,
and death* draws near.
- 4 I am as good as dead,
like a strong man with no strength left.

- 5 They have left me among the dead,
and I lie like a corpse in a grave.
I am forgotten,
cut off from your care.
- 6 You have thrown me into the lowest pit,
into the darkest depths.
- 7 Your anger weighs me down;
with wave after wave you have
engulfed me. *Interlude*
- 8 You have driven my friends away
by making me repulsive to them.
I am in a trap with no way of escape.
- 9 My eyes are blinded by my tears.
Each day I beg for your help, O LORD;
I lift my hands to you for mercy.
- 10 Are your wonderful deeds of any use to the
dead?
Do the dead rise up and praise you?
Interlude
- 11 Can those in the grave declare your
unfailing love?
Can they proclaim your faithfulness in
the place of destruction?*
- 12 Can the darkness speak of your wonderful
deeds?
Can anyone in the land of forgetfulness
talk about your righteousness?
- 13 O LORD, I cry out to you.
I will keep on pleading day by day.
- 14 O LORD, why do you reject me?
Why do you turn your face from me?
- 15 I have been sick and close to death since my
youth.
I stand helpless and desperate before
your terrors.
- 16 Your fierce anger has overwhelmed me.
Your terrors have paralyzed me.
- 17 They swirl around me like floodwaters all
day long.
They have engulfed me completely.
- 18 You have taken away my companions and
loved ones.
Darkness is my closest friend.

P S A L M **89**
A psalm of Ethan the Ezrahite.*

- 1 I will sing of the LORD's unfailing love
forever!
Young and old will hear of your
faithfulness.
- 2 Your unfailing love will last forever.
Your faithfulness is as enduring as the
heavens.

87:2 Hebrew *He loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.* See note on 44:4. 87:4a Hebrew *Rahab*, the name of a mythical sea monster that represents chaos in ancient literature. The name is used here as a poetic name for Egypt. 87:4b Hebrew *Cush*. 87:5 Hebrew *Zion*. 87:7 Or *will dance*. 88:TITLE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. 88:3 Hebrew *Sheol*. 88:11 Hebrew *in Abaddon?* 89:TITLE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

- 3 The LORD said, "I have made a covenant with David, my chosen servant. I have sworn this oath to him:
- 4 I will establish your descendants as kings forever; they will sit on your throne from now until eternity." *Interlude*
- 5 All heaven will praise your great wonders, LORD; myriads of angels will praise you for your faithfulness.
- 6 For who in all of heaven can compare with the LORD? What mightiest angel is anything like the LORD?
- 7 The highest angelic powers stand in awe of God. He is far more awesome than all who surround his throne.
- 8 O LORD God of Heaven's Armies! Where is there anyone as mighty as you, O LORD? You are entirely faithful.
- 9 You rule the oceans. You subdue their storm-tossed waves.
- 10 You crushed the great sea monster.* You scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.
- 11 The heavens are yours, and the earth is yours; everything in the world is yours—you created it all.
- 12 You created north and south. Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon praise your name.
- 13 Powerful is your arm! Strong is your hand! Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength.
- 14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne. Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.
- 15 Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, LORD.
- 16 They rejoice all day long in your wonderful reputation. They exult in your righteousness.
- 17 You are their glorious strength. It pleases you to make us strong.
- 18 Yes, our protection comes from the LORD, and he, the Holy One of Israel, has given us our king.
- 19 Long ago you spoke in a vision to your faithful people. You said, "I have raised up a warrior. I have selected him from the common people to be king.
- 20 I have found my servant David. I have anointed him with my holy oil.
- 21 I will steady him with my hand; with my powerful arm I will make him strong.
- 22 His enemies will not defeat him, nor will the wicked overpower him.
- 23 I will beat down his adversaries before him and destroy those who hate him.
- 24 My faithfulness and unfailing love will be with him, and by my authority he will grow in power.
- 25 I will extend his rule over the sea, his dominion over the rivers.
- 26 And he will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'
- 27 I will make him my firstborn son, the mightiest king on earth.
- 28 I will love him and be kind to him forever; my covenant with him will never end.
- 29 I will preserve an heir for him; his throne will be as endless as the days of heaven.
- 30 But if his descendants forsake my instructions and fail to obey my regulations, 31 if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands, 32 then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their disobedience with beating.
- 33 But I will never stop loving him nor fail to keep my promise to him.
- 34 No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said.
- 35 I have sworn an oath to David, and in my holiness I cannot lie: 36 His dynasty will go on forever; his kingdom will endure as the sun.
- 37 It will be as eternal as the moon, my faithful witness in the sky!" *Interlude*
- 38 But now you have rejected him and cast him off. You are angry with your anointed king.
- 39 You have renounced your covenant with him; you have thrown his crown in the dust.
- 40 You have broken down the walls protecting him and ruined every fort defending him.
- 41 Everyone who comes along has robbed him,

89:10 Hebrew *Rahab*, the name of a mythical sea monster that represents chaos in ancient literature.

- and he has become a joke to his neighbors.
- 42 You have strengthened his enemies and made them all rejoice.
- 43 You have made his sword useless and refused to help him in battle.
- 44 You have ended his splendor and overturned his throne.
- 45 You have made him old before his time and publicly disgraced him. *Interlude*
- 46 O LORD, how long will this go on? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your anger burn like fire?
- 47 Remember how short my life is, how empty and futile this human existence!
- 48 No one can live forever; all will die. No one can escape the power of the grave.* *Interlude*
- 49 Lord, where is your unfailing love? You promised it to David with a faithful pledge.
- 50 Consider, Lord, how your servants are disgraced! I carry in my heart the insults of so many people.
- 51 Your enemies have mocked me, O LORD; they mock your anointed king wherever he goes.
- 52 Praise the LORD forever! Amen and amen!

BOOK FOUR (Psalms 90–106)

P S A L M **90***A prayer of Moses, the man of God.*

- 1 Lord, through all the generations you have been our home!
- 2 Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God.
- 3 You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, you mortals!"
- 4 For you, a thousand years are as a passing day, as brief as a few night hours.
- 5 You sweep people away like dreams that disappear. They are like grass that springs up in the morning.
- 6 In the morning it blooms and flourishes, but by evening it is dry and withered.
- 7 We wither beneath your anger; we are overwhelmed by your fury.

- 8 You spread out our sins before you—our secret sins—and you see them all.
- 9 We live our lives beneath your wrath, ending our years with a groan.
- 10 Seventy years are given to us! Some even live to eighty. But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we fly away.
- 11 Who can comprehend the power of your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear you deserve.
- 12 Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.
- 13 O LORD, come back to us! How long will you delay? Take pity on your servants!
- 14 Satisfy us each morning with your unfailing love, so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives.
- 15 Give us gladness in proportion to our former misery! Replace the evil years with good.
- 16 Let us, your servants, see your work again; let our children see your glory.
- 17 And may the Lord our God show us his approval and make our efforts successful. Yes, make our efforts successful!

P S A L M **91**

- 1 Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 This I declare about the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him.
- 3 For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease.
- 4 He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.
- 5 Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day.
- 6 Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday.
- 7 Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you.
- 8 Just open your eyes, and see how the wicked are punished.


cornerstones
WHAT DO ANGELS DO IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN?
Read PSALM 91:1-16

People often wonder if Christians have guardian angels—an angel specifically assigned to him or her. The Bible is not clear on this. Both the Old and

New Testaments show that angels are active in the lives of believers (for examples, see 1 Kings 19:5, p. 310; Daniel 6:22, p. 764; Matthew 18:10, p. 860; Luke 16:22, p. 924; Acts 12:7, p. 981).

This passage contains some wonderful promises concerning angels. Yet these promises will only be met once a person has fulfilled the specified condition. In this case, a relationship with God is necessary to receive his promise of angelic protection. Once this condition is met, God will command his angels to rescue his followers from threatening situations, according to his will.

For the next note on “What Are Angels?” turn to p. 768.

- ⁹ If you make the LORD your refuge,
if you make the Most High your shelter,
¹⁰ no evil will conquer you;
no plague will come near your home.
¹¹ For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.
¹² They will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on
a stone.
¹³ You will trample upon lions and cobras;
you will crush fierce lions and serpents
under your feet!
¹⁴ The LORD says, “I will rescue those who
love me.
I will protect those who trust in my name.
¹⁵ When they call on me, I will answer;
I will be with them in trouble.
I will rescue and honor them.
¹⁶ I will reward them with a long life
and give them my salvation.”

PSALM 92

A psalm. A song to be sung on the Sabbath Day.

- ¹ It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praises to the Most High.
² It is good to proclaim your unending love
in the morning,
your faithfulness in the evening,
³ accompanied by the ten-stringed harp
and the melody of the lyre.
⁴ You thrill me, LORD, with all you have done
for me!
I sing for joy because of what you
have done.
⁵ O LORD, what great works you do!
And how deep are your thoughts.
⁶ Only a simpleton would not know,
and only a fool would not
understand this:

- ⁷ Though the wicked sprout like weeds
and evildoers flourish,
they will be destroyed forever.
⁸ But you, O LORD, will be exalted forever.
⁹ Your enemies, LORD, will surely perish;
all evildoers will be scattered.
¹⁰ But you have made me as strong as
a wild ox.
You have anointed me with
the finest oil.
¹¹ My eyes have seen the downfall of my
enemies;
my ears have heard the defeat of my
wicked opponents.
¹² But the godly will flourish like palm trees
and grow strong like the cedars of
Lebanon.
¹³ For they are transplanted to the LORD's
own house.
They flourish in the courts of our God.
¹⁴ Even in old age they will still produce fruit;
they will remain vital and green.
¹⁵ They will declare, “The LORD is just!
He is my rock!
There is no evil in him!”

PSALM 93

- ¹ The LORD is king! He is robed in majesty.
Indeed, the LORD is robed in majesty and
armed with strength.
The world stands firm
and cannot be shaken.
² Your throne, O LORD, has stood from time
immemorial.
You yourself are from the everlasting
past.
³ The floods have risen up, O LORD.
The floods have roared like thunder;
the floods have lifted their pounding
waves.

- 4 But mightier than the violent raging
of the seas,
mightier than the breakers on the
shore—
the LORD above is mightier than these!
- 5 Your royal laws cannot be changed.
Your reign, O LORD, is holy forever
and ever.

P S A L M **94**

- 1 O LORD, the God of vengeance,
O God of vengeance, let your glorious
justice shine forth!
- 2 Arise, O judge of the earth.
Give the proud what they deserve.
- 3 How long, O LORD?
How long will the wicked be allowed to
gloat?
- 4 How long will they speak with arrogance?
How long will these evil people boast?
- 5 They crush your people, LORD,
hurting those you claim as your own.
- 6 They kill widows and foreigners
and murder orphans.
- 7 "The LORD isn't looking,"
they say,
"and besides, the God of Israel*
doesn't care."
- 8 Think again, you fools!
When will you finally catch on?
- 9 Is he deaf—the one who made your ears?
Is he blind—the one who formed
your eyes?
- 10 He punishes the nations—won't he also
punish you?
He knows everything—doesn't he also
know what you are doing?
- 11 The LORD knows people's thoughts;
he knows they are worthless!
- 12 Joyful are those you discipline, LORD,
those you teach with your instructions.
- 13 You give them relief from troubled times
until a pit is dug to capture the wicked.
- 14 The LORD will not reject his people;
he will not abandon his special
possession.
- 15 Judgment will again be founded on justice,
and those with virtuous hearts will
pursue it.
- 16 Who will protect me from the wicked?
Who will stand up for me against
evildoers?
- 17 Unless the LORD had helped me,
I would soon have settled in the silence
of the grave.
- 18 I cried out, "I am slipping!"

94:7 Hebrew of Jacob. See note on 44:4.

- but your unfailing love, O LORD,
supported me.
- 19 When doubts filled my mind,
your comfort gave me renewed hope and
cheer.
- 20 Can unjust leaders claim that God is on
their side—
leaders whose decrees permit injustice?
- 21 They gang up against the righteous
and condemn the innocent to death.
- 22 But the LORD is my fortress;
my God is the mighty rock where I hide.
- 23 God will turn the sins of evil people back on
them.
He will destroy them for their sins.
The LORD our God will destroy them.

P S A L M **95**

- 1 Come, let us sing to the LORD!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our
salvation.
- 2 Let us come to him with thanksgiving.
Let us sing psalms of praise to him.
- 3 For the LORD is a great God,
a great King above all gods.
- 4 He holds in his hands the depths of
the earth
and the mightiest mountains.
- 5 The sea belongs to him, for he made it.
His hands formed the dry land, too.
- 6 Come, let us worship and bow down.
Let us kneel before the LORD our maker,
- 7 for he is our God.
We are the people he watches over,
the flock under his care.
- If only you would listen to his voice today!
- 8 The LORD says, "Don't harden your hearts as
Israel did at Meribah,
as they did at Massah in the wilderness.
- 9 For there your ancestors tested and tried
my patience,
even though they saw everything I did.
- 10 For forty years I was angry with them, and
I said,
"They are a people whose hearts turn away
from me.
They refuse to do what I tell them.'
- 11 So in my anger I took an oath:
"They will never enter my place of rest.'"

P S A L M **96**

- 1 Sing a new song to the LORD!
Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!
- 2 Sing to the LORD; praise his name.
Each day proclaim the good news that
he saves.

- ³ Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.
 Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.
- ⁴ Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise!
 He is to be feared above all gods.
- ⁵ The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the LORD made the heavens!
- ⁶ Honor and majesty surround him; strength and beauty fill his sanctuary.
- ⁷ O nations of the world, recognize the LORD; recognize that the LORD is glorious and strong.
- ⁸ Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his courts.
- ⁹ Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor. Let all the earth tremble before him.
- ¹⁰ Tell all the nations, "The LORD reigns!" The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.
 He will judge all peoples fairly.
- ¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice!
 Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!
- ¹² Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy!
 Let the trees of the forest rustle with praise
- ¹³ before the LORD, for he is coming!
 He is coming to judge the earth.
 He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with his truth.

P S A L M **97**

- ¹ The LORD is king!
 Let the earth rejoice!
 Let the farthest coastlands be glad.
- ² Dark clouds surround him.
 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
- ³ Fire spreads ahead of him and burns up all his foes.
- ⁴ His lightning flashes out across the world. The earth sees and trembles.
- ⁵ The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
 before the Lord of all the earth.
- ⁶ The heavens proclaim his righteousness; every nation sees his glory.
- ⁷ Those who worship idols are disgraced—all who brag about their worthless gods—
 for every god must bow to him.
- ⁸ Jerusalem* has heard and rejoiced,

- and all the towns of Judah are glad because of your justice, O LORD!
- ⁹ For you, O LORD, are supreme over all the earth;
 you are exalted far above all gods.
- ¹⁰ You who love the LORD, hate evil!
 He protects the lives of his godly people and rescues them from the power of the wicked.
- ¹¹ Light shines on the godly,
 and joy on those whose hearts are right.
- ¹² May all who are godly rejoice in the LORD and praise his holy name!

P S A L M **98**
A psalm.

- ¹ Sing a new song to the LORD,
 for he has done wonderful deeds.
 His right hand has won a mighty victory;
 his holy arm has shown his saving power!
- ² The LORD has announced his victory and has revealed his righteousness to every nation!
- ³ He has remembered his promise to love and be faithful to Israel.
 The ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.
- ⁴ Shout to the LORD, all the earth;
 break out in praise and sing for joy!
- ⁵ Sing your praise to the LORD with the harp,
 with the harp and melodious song,
⁶ with trumpets and the sound of the ram's horn.
 Make a joyful symphony before the LORD,
 the King!
- ⁷ Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!
 Let the earth and all living things join in.
- ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands in glee!
 Let the hills sing out their songs of joy
⁹ before the LORD.
 For the LORD is coming to judge the earth.
 He will judge the world with justice,
 and the nations with fairness.

P S A L M **99**

- ¹ The LORD is king!
 Let the nations tremble!
 He sits on his throne between the cherubim.
 Let the whole earth quake!
- ² The LORD sits in majesty in Jerusalem,*
 exalted above all the nations.
- ³ Let them praise your great and awesome name.
 Your name is holy!

- 4 Mighty King, lover of justice,
you have established fairness.
You have acted with justice
and righteousness throughout Israel.*
- 5 Exalt the LORD our God!
Bow low before his feet, for he is holy!
- 6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests;
Samuel also called on his name.
They cried to the LORD for help,
and he answered them.
- 7 He spoke to Israel from the pillar of cloud,
and they followed the laws and decrees
he gave them.
- 8 O LORD our God, you answered them.
You were a forgiving God to them,
but you punished them when they went
wrong.
- 9 Exalt the LORD our God,
and worship at his holy mountain in
Jerusalem,
for the LORD our God is holy!

P S A L M **100**

A psalm of thanksgiving.

- 1 Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!
2 Worship the LORD with gladness.
Come before him, singing with joy.
- 3 Acknowledge that the LORD is God!
He made us, and we are his.*
We are his people, the sheep of his
pasture.
- 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and praise his name.
- 5 For the LORD is good.
His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to each
generation.

P S A L M **101**

A psalm of David.

- 1 I will sing of your love and justice, LORD.
I will praise you with songs.
- 2 I will be careful to live a blameless life—
when will you come to help me?
I will lead a life of integrity
in my own home.
- 3 I will refuse to look at
anything vile and vulgar.
I hate all who deal crookedly;
I will have nothing to do with them.
- 4 I will reject perverse ideas
and stay away from every evil.
- 5 I will not tolerate people who slander their
neighbors.
I will not endure conceit and pride.

- 6 I will search for faithful people
to be my companions.
Only those who are above reproach
will be allowed to serve me.
- 7 I will not allow deceivers to serve in my
house,
and liars will not stay in my presence.
- 8 My daily task will be to ferret out the
wicked
and free the city of the LORD from
their grip.

P S A L M **102**

*A prayer of one overwhelmed with trouble, pouring
out problems before the LORD.*

- 1 LORD, hear my prayer!
Listen to my plea!
- 2 Don't turn away from me
in my time of distress.
Bend down to listen,
and answer me quickly when I call to you.
- 3 For my days disappear like smoke,
and my bones burn like red-hot coals.
- 4 My heart is sick, withered like grass,
and I have lost my appetite.
- 5 Because of my groaning,
I am reduced to skin and bones.
- 6 I am like an owl in the desert,
like a little owl in a far-off wilderness.
- 7 I lie awake,
lonely as a solitary bird on the roof.
- 8 My enemies taunt me day after day.
They mock and curse me.
- 9 I eat ashes for food.
My tears run down into my drink
- 10 because of your anger and wrath.
For you have picked me up and thrown
me out.
- 11 My life passes as swiftly as the evening
shadows.
I am withering away like grass.
- 12 But you, O LORD, will sit on your throne
forever.
Your fame will endure to every
generation.
- 13 You will arise and have mercy on
Jerusalem*—
and now is the time to pity her,
now is the time you promised to help.
- 14 For your people love every stone in
her walls
and cherish even the dust in her streets.
- 15 Then the nations will tremble before the
LORD.
The kings of the earth will tremble
before his glory.

99:4 Hebrew *Jacob*. See note on 44:4. 100:3 As in an alternate reading in the Masoretic Text; the other alternate and some ancient versions read *and not we ourselves*. 102:13 Hebrew *Zion*; also in 102:16.

- 16 For the LORD will rebuild Jerusalem.
He will appear in his glory.
- 17 He will listen to the prayers of the destitute.
He will not reject their pleas.
- 18 Let this be recorded for future generations,
so that a people not yet born will praise
the LORD.
- 19 Tell them the LORD looked down
from his heavenly sanctuary.
He looked down to earth from heaven
- 20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to release those condemned to die.
- 21 And so the LORD's fame will be celebrated
in Zion,
his praises in Jerusalem,
- 22 when multitudes gather together
and kingdoms come to worship the
LORD.
- 23 He broke my strength in midlife,
cutting short my days.
- 24 But I cried to him, "O my God, who lives
forever,
don't take my life while I am so young!
- 25 Long ago you laid the foundation of the
earth
and made the heavens with your hands.
- 26 They will perish, but you remain forever;
they will wear out like old clothing.
You will change them like a garment
and discard them.
- 27 But you are always the same;
you will live forever.
- 28 The children of your people
will live in security.
Their children's children
will thrive in your presence."

P S A L M **103***A psalm of David.*

- 1 Let all that I am praise the LORD;
with my whole heart, I will praise his holy
name.
- 2 Let all that I am praise the LORD;
may I never forget the good things he
does for me.
- 3 He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
- 4 He redeems me from death
and crowns me with love and tender
mercies.
- 5 He fills my life with good things.
My youth is renewed like the eagle's!
- 6 The LORD gives righteousness
and justice to all who are treated unfairly.
- 7 He revealed his character to Moses
and his deeds to the people of Israel.

- 8 The LORD is compassionate and merciful,
slow to get angry and filled with
unfailing love.
- 9 He will not constantly accuse us,
nor remain angry forever.
- 10 He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us,
as we deserve.
- 11 For his unfailing love toward those who
fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens
above the earth.
- 12 He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west.
- 13 The LORD is like a father to his children,
tender and compassionate to those who
fear him.
- 14 For he knows how weak we are;
he remembers we are only dust.
- 15 Our days on earth are like grass;
like wildflowers, we bloom and die.
- 16 The wind blows, and we are gone—
as though we had never been here.
- 17 But the love of the LORD remains forever
with those who fear him.
His salvation extends to the children's
children
- 18 of those who are faithful to his covenant,
of those who obey his commandments!
- 19 The LORD has made the heavens his throne;
from there he rules over everything.
- 20 Praise the LORD, you angels,
you mighty ones who carry out his plans,
listening for each of his commands.
- 21 Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels
who serve him and do his will!
- 22 Praise the LORD, everything he has created,
everything in all his kingdom.

Let all that I am praise the LORD.

P S A L M **104**

- 1 Let all that I am praise the LORD.
O LORD my God, how great you are!
You are robed with honor and majesty.
- 2 You are dressed in a robe of light.
You stretch out the starry curtain of the
heavens;
- 3 you lay out the rafters of your home
in the rain clouds.
You make the clouds your chariot;
you ride upon the wings of the wind.
- 4 The winds are your messengers;
flames of fire are your servants.*
- 5 You placed the world on its foundation
so it would never be moved.

- 6 You clothed the earth with floods of water,
water that covered even the mountains.
- 7 At your command, the water fled;
at the sound of your thunder, it hurried
away.
- 8 Mountains rose and valleys sank
to the levels you decreed.
- 9 Then you set a firm boundary for the seas,
so they would never again cover the
earth.
- 10 You make springs pour water into the
ravines,
so streams gush down from the
mountains.
- 11 They provide water for all the animals,
and the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
- 12 The birds nest beside the streams
and sing among the branches of the
trees.
- 13 You send rain on the mountains from your
heavenly home,
and you fill the earth with the fruit of
your labor.
- 14 You cause grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for people to use.
You allow them to produce food from the
earth—
- 15 wine to make them glad,
olive oil to soothe their skin,
and bread to give them strength.
- 16 The trees of the LORD are well cared for—
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- 17 There the birds make their nests,
and the storks make their homes in the
cypresses.
- 18 High in the mountains live the wild goats,
and the rocks form a refuge for the
hyraxes.*
- 19 You made the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun knows when to set.
- 20 You send the darkness, and it becomes
night,
when all the forest animals prowl about.
- 21 Then the young lions roar for their prey,
stalking the food provided by God.
- 22 At dawn they slink back
into their dens to rest.
- 23 Then people go off to their work,
where they labor until evening.
- 24 O LORD, what a variety of things you have
made!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.
- 25 Here is the ocean, vast and wide,
teeming with life of every kind,
both large and small.
- 26 See the ships sailing along,
and Leviathan,* which you made to play
in the sea.
- 27 They all depend on you
to give them food as they need it.
- 28 When you supply it, they gather it.
You open your hand to feed them,
and they are richly satisfied.
- 29 But if you turn away from them, they panic.
When you take away their breath,
they die and turn again to dust.
- 30 When you give them your breath,* life is
created,
and you renew the face of the earth.
- 31 May the glory of the LORD continue forever!
The LORD takes pleasure in all he has
made!
- 32 The earth trembles at his glance;
the mountains smoke at his touch.
- 33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live.
I will praise my God to my last breath!
- 34 May all my thoughts be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.
- 35 Let all sinners vanish from the face of the
earth;
let the wicked disappear forever.
- Let all that I am praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD!

P S A L M 105

- 1 Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his
greatness.
Let the whole world know what he has
done.
- 2 Sing to him; yes, sing his praises.
Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds.
- 3 Exult in his holy name;
rejoice, you who worship the LORD.
- 4 Search for the LORD and for his strength;
continually seek him.
- 5 Remember the wonders he has performed,
his miracles, and the rulings he has given,
- 6 you children of his servant Abraham,
you descendants of Jacob, his chosen
ones.
- 7 He is the LORD our God.
His justice is seen throughout the land.
- 8 He always stands by his covenant—
the commitment he made to a thousand
generations.
- 9 This is the covenant he made with Abraham
and the oath he swore to Isaac.
- 10 He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,

104:18 Or *coney*s, or *rock badgers*. 104:26 The identification of Leviathan is disputed, ranging from an earthly creature to a mythical sea monster in ancient literature. 104:30 Or *When you send your Spirit*.

and to the people of Israel as a never-ending covenant:

- 11 "I will give you the land of Canaan as your special possession."
- 12 He said this when they were few in number, a tiny group of strangers in Canaan.
- 13 They wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another.
- 14 Yet he did not let anyone oppress them. He warned kings on their behalf:
- 15 "Do not touch my chosen people, and do not hurt my prophets."
- 16 He called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply.
- 17 Then he sent someone to Egypt ahead of them— Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
- 18 They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar.
- 19 Until the time came to fulfill his dreams,* the LORD tested Joseph's character.
- 20 Then Pharaoh sent for him and set him free; the ruler of the nation opened his prison door.
- 21 Joseph was put in charge of all the king's household; he became ruler over all the king's possessions.
- 22 He could instruct the king's aides as he pleased and teach the king's advisers.
- 23 Then Israel arrived in Egypt; Jacob lived as a foreigner in the land of Ham.
- 24 And the LORD multiplied the people of Israel until they became too mighty for their enemies.
- 25 Then he turned the Egyptians against the Israelites, and they plotted against the LORD's servants.
- 26 But the LORD sent his servant Moses, along with Aaron, whom he had chosen.
- 27 They performed miraculous signs among the Egyptians, and wonders in the land of Ham.
- 28 The LORD blanketed Egypt in darkness, for they had defied his commands to let his people go.
- 29 He turned their water into blood, poisoning all the fish.
- 30 Then frogs overran the land and even invaded the king's bedrooms.
- 31 When the LORD spoke, flies descended on the Egyptians, and gnats swarmed across Egypt.
- 32 He sent them hail instead of rain, and lightning flashed over the land.
- 33 He ruined their grapevines and fig trees and shattered all the trees.
- 34 He spoke, and hordes of locusts came— young locusts beyond number.
- 35 They ate up everything green in the land, destroying all the crops in their fields.
- 36 Then he killed the oldest son in each Egyptian home, the pride and joy of each family.
- 37 The LORD brought his people out of Egypt, loaded with silver and gold; and not one among the tribes of Israel even stumbled.
- 38 Egypt was glad when they were gone, for they feared them greatly.
- 39 The LORD spread a cloud above them as a covering and gave them a great fire to light the darkness.
- 40 They asked for meat, and he sent them quail; he satisfied their hunger with manna— bread from heaven.
- 41 He split open a rock, and water gushed out to form a river through the dry wasteland.
- 42 For he remembered his sacred promise to his servant Abraham.
- 43 So he brought his people out of Egypt with joy, his chosen ones with rejoicing.
- 44 He gave his people the lands of pagan nations, and they harvested crops that others had planted.
- 45 All this happened so they would follow his decrees and obey his instructions.

Praise the LORD!

P S A L M 106

¹ Praise the LORD!

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

² Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD?

Who can ever praise him enough?

³ There is joy for those who deal justly with others and always do what is right.

- 4 Remember me, LORD, when you show favor to your people; come near and rescue me.
 5 Let me share in the prosperity of your chosen ones.
 Let me rejoice in the joy of your people; let me praise you with those who are your heritage.
 6 Like our ancestors, we have sinned.
 We have done wrong! We have acted wickedly!
 7 Our ancestors in Egypt were not impressed by the LORD's miraculous deeds.
 They soon forgot his many acts of kindness to them.
 Instead, they rebelled against him at the Red Sea.*
 8 Even so, he saved them—
 to defend the honor of his name and to demonstrate his mighty power.
 9 He commanded the Red Sea* to dry up.
 He led Israel across the sea as if it were a desert.
 10 So he rescued them from their enemies and redeemed them from their foes.
 11 Then the water returned and covered their enemies;
 not one of them survived.
 12 Then his people believed his promises.
 Then they sang his praise.
 13 Yet how quickly they forgot what he had done!
 They wouldn't wait for his counsel!
 14 In the wilderness their desires ran wild,
 testing God's patience in that dry wasteland.
 15 So he gave them what they asked for,
 but he sent a plague along with it.
 16 The people in the camp were jealous of Moses
 and envious of Aaron, the LORD's holy priest.
 17 Because of this, the earth opened up;
 it swallowed Dathan
 and buried Abiram and the other rebels.
 18 Fire fell upon their followers;
 a flame consumed the wicked.
 19 The people made a calf at Mount Sinai*;
 they bowed before an image made of gold.
 20 They traded their glorious God
 for a statue of a grass-eating bull.
 21 They forgot God, their savior,
 who had done such great things in
 Egypt—
 22 such wonderful things in the land of Ham,
 such awesome deeds at the Red Sea.
 23 So he declared he would destroy them.
 But Moses, his chosen one, stepped
 between the LORD and the people.
 He begged him to turn from his anger
 and not destroy them.
 24 The people refused to enter the pleasant
 land,
 for they wouldn't believe his promise
 to care for them.
 25 Instead, they grumbled in their tents
 and refused to obey the LORD.
 26 Therefore, he solemnly swore
 that he would kill them in the wilderness,
 27 that he would scatter their descendants
 among the nations,
 exiling them to distant lands.
 28 Then our ancestors joined in the worship
 of Baal at Peor;
 they even ate sacrifices offered to the
 dead!
 29 They angered the LORD with all these
 things,
 so a plague broke out among them.
 30 But Phinehas had the courage to intervene,
 and the plague was stopped.
 31 So he has been regarded as a righteous man
 ever since that time.
 32 At Meribah, too, they angered the LORD,
 causing Moses serious trouble.
 33 They made Moses angry,*
 and he spoke foolishly.
 34 Israel failed to destroy the nations in
 the land,
 as the LORD had commanded them.
 35 Instead, they mingled among the pagans
 and adopted their evil customs.
 36 They worshiped their idols,
 which led to their downfall.
 37 They even sacrificed their sons
 and their daughters to the demons.
 38 They shed innocent blood,
 the blood of their sons and daughters.
 By sacrificing them to the idols of Canaan,
 they polluted the land with murder.
 39 They defiled themselves by their evil deeds,
 and their love of idols was adultery in the
 LORD's sight.
 40 That is why the LORD's anger burned
 against his people,
 and he abhorred his own special
 possession.

106:7 Hebrew *at the sea, the sea of reeds*. 106:9 Hebrew *sea of reeds*; also in 106:22. 106:19 Hebrew *at Horeb*, another name for Sinai. 106:33 Hebrew *They embittered his spirit*.

- 41 He handed them over to pagan nations,
and they were ruled by those who hated
them.
- 42 Their enemies crushed them
and brought them under their cruel
power.
- 43 Again and again he rescued them,
but they chose to rebel against him,
and they were finally destroyed
by their sin.
- 44 Even so, he pitied them in their distress
and listened to their cries.
- 45 He remembered his covenant with them
and relented because of his
unfailing love.
- 46 He even caused their captors
to treat them with kindness.
- 47 Save us, O LORD our God!
Gather us back from among the nations,
so we can thank your holy name
and rejoice and praise you.
- 48 Praise the LORD, the God of Israel,
who lives from everlasting to everlasting!
Let all the people say, "Amen!"
- Praise the LORD!

BOOK FIVE (Psalms 107–150)

P S A L M **107**

- ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.
- ² Has the LORD redeemed you? Then
speak out!
Tell others he has redeemed you from
your enemies.
- ³ For he has gathered the exiles from many
lands,
from east and west,
from north and south.
- ⁴ Some wandered in the wilderness,
lost and homeless.
- ⁵ Hungry and thirsty,
they nearly died.
- ⁶ "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he rescued them from their distress.
- ⁷ He led them straight to safety,
to a city where they could live.
- ⁸ Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done
for them.
- ⁹ For he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.
- ¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and deepest gloom,
imprisoned in iron chains of misery.
- ¹¹ They rebelled against the words of God,
scorning the counsel of the Most High.
- ¹² That is why he broke them with hard labor;
they fell, and no one was there to help
them.
- ¹³ "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.
- ¹⁴ He led them from the darkness and deepest
gloom;
he snapped their chains.
- ¹⁵ Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done
for them.
- ¹⁶ For he broke down their prison gates of
bronze;
he cut apart their bars of iron.
- ¹⁷ Some were fools; they rebelled
and suffered for their sins.
- ¹⁸ They couldn't stand the thought of food,
and they were knocking on death's door.
- ¹⁹ "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.
- ²⁰ He sent out his word and healed them,
snatching them from the door of death.
- ²¹ Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done
for them.
- ²² Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving
and sing joyfully about his glorious acts.
- ²³ Some went off to sea in ships,
plying the trade routes of the world.
- ²⁴ They, too, observed the LORD's power in
action,
his impressive works on the deepest seas.
- ²⁵ He spoke, and the winds rose,
stirring up the waves.
- ²⁶ Their ships were tossed to the heavens
and plunged again to the depths;
the sailors cringed in terror.
- ²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunkards
and were at their wits' end.
- ²⁸ "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.
- ²⁹ He calmed the storm to a whisper
and stilled the waves.
- ³⁰ What a blessing was that stillness
as he brought them safely into harbor!
- ³¹ Let them praise the LORD for his
great love
and for the wonderful things he has
done for them.
- ³² Let them exalt him publicly before the
congregation
and before the leaders of the nation.
- ³³ He changes rivers into deserts,
and springs of water into dry,
thirsty land.
- ³⁴ He turns the fruitful land into salty
wastelands,

- because of the wickedness of those who live there.
- 35 But he also turns deserts into pools of water,
the dry land into springs of water.
- 36 He brings the hungry to settle there and to build their cities.
- 37 They sow their fields, plant their vineyards, and harvest their bumper crops.
- 38 How he blesses them!
They raise large families there, and their herds of livestock increase.
- 39 When they decrease in number and become impoverished through oppression, trouble, and sorrow,
- 40 the LORD pours contempt on their princes, causing them to wander in trackless wastelands.
- 41 But he rescues the poor from trouble and increases their families like flocks of sheep.
- 42 The godly will see these things and be glad, while the wicked are struck silent.
- 43 Those who are wise will take all this to heart;
they will see in our history the faithful love of the LORD.

P S A L M **108**

A song. A psalm of David.

- 1 My heart is confident in you, O God;
no wonder I can sing your praises with all my heart!
- 2 Wake up, lyre and harp!
I will wake the dawn with my song.
- 3 I will thank you, LORD, among all the people.
I will sing your praises among the nations.
- 4 For your unflinching love is higher than the heavens.
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
- 5 Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens.
May your glory shine over all the earth.
- 6 Now rescue your beloved people.
Answer and save us by your power.
- 7 God has promised this by his holiness*:
"I will divide up Shechem with joy.
I will measure out the valley of Succoth.
- 8 Gilead is mine,
and Manasseh, too.
Ephraim, my helmet, will produce my warriors,
and Judah, my scepter, will produce my kings.

- 9 But Moab, my washbasin, will become my servant,
and I will wipe my feet on Edom and shout in triumph over Philistia."
- 10 Who will bring me into the fortified city?
Who will bring me victory over Edom?
- 11 Have you rejected us, O God?
Will you no longer march with our armies?
- 12 Oh, please help us against our enemies,
for all human help is useless.
- 13 With God's help we will do mighty things,
for he will trample down our foes.

P S A L M **109**

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 O God, whom I praise,
don't stand silent and aloof
- 2 while the wicked slander me and tell lies about me.
- 3 They surround me with hateful words and fight against me for no reason.
- 4 I love them, but they try to destroy me with accusations
even as I am praying for them!
- 5 They repay evil for good,
and hatred for my love.
- 6 They say,* "Get an evil person to turn against him.
Send an accuser to bring him to trial.
- 7 When his case comes up for judgment, let him be pronounced guilty.
Count his prayers as sins.
- 8 Let his years be few;
let someone else take his position.
- 9 May his children become fatherless,
and his wife a widow.
- 10 May his children wander as beggars and be driven from their ruined homes.
- 11 May creditors seize his entire estate,
and strangers take all he has earned.
- 12 Let no one be kind to him;
let no one pity his fatherless children.
- 13 May all his offspring die.
May his family name be blotted out in a single generation.
- 14 May the LORD never forget the sins of his fathers;
may his mother's sins never be erased from the record.
- 15 May the LORD always remember these sins,
and may his name disappear from human memory.
- 16 For he refused all kindness to others;
he persecuted the poor and needy,

and he hounded the brokenhearted
to death.

17 He loved to curse others;
now you curse him.
He never blessed others;
now don't you bless him.

18 Cursing is as natural to him as his clothing,
or the water he drinks,
or the rich food he eats.

19 Now may his curses return and cling to him
like clothing;
may they be tied around him like a belt."

20 May those curses become the LORD's
punishment
for my accusers who speak evil of me.

21 But deal well with me, O Sovereign LORD,
for the sake of your own reputation!
Rescue me
because you are so faithful and good.

22 For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is full of pain.

23 I am fading like a shadow at dusk;
I am brushed off like a locust.

24 My knees are weak from fasting,
and I am skin and bones.

25 I am a joke to people everywhere;
when they see me, they shake their heads
in scorn.

26 Help me, O LORD my God!
Save me because of your unfailing love.

27 Let them see that this is your doing,
that you yourself have done it, LORD.

28 Then let them curse me if they like,
but you will bless me!
When they attack me, they will be
disgraced!
But I, your servant, will go right on
rejoicing!

29 May my accusers be clothed with disgrace;
may their humiliation cover
them like a cloak.

30 But I will give repeated thanks to the LORD,
praising him to everyone.

31 For he stands beside the needy,
ready to save them from those who
condemn them.

P S A L M **110**
A psalm of David.

1 The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit in the place of honor at my right
hand
until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your feet."
2 The LORD will extend your powerful
kingdom from Jerusalem*;

you will rule over your enemies.

3 When you go to war,
your people will serve you willingly.
You are arrayed in holy garments,
and your strength will be renewed each
day like the morning dew.

4 The LORD has taken an oath and will not
break his vow:
"You are a priest forever in the order
of Melchizedek."

5 The Lord stands at your right hand to
protect you.
He will strike down many kings when
his anger erupts.

6 He will punish the nations
and fill their lands with corpses;
he will shatter heads over the whole
earth.

7 But he himself will be refreshed from
brooks along the way.
He will be victorious.

P S A L M **111***

1 Praise the LORD!
I will thank the LORD with all my heart
as I meet with his godly people.

2 How amazing are the deeds of the LORD!
All who delight in him should ponder
them.

3 Everything he does reveals his glory and
majesty.
His righteousness never fails.

4 He causes us to remember his wonderful
works.
How gracious and merciful is our LORD!

5 He gives food to those who fear him;
he always remembers his covenant.

6 He has shown his great power to his people
by giving them the lands of other
nations.

7 All he does is just and good,
and all his commandments are
trustworthy.

8 They are forever true,
to be obeyed faithfully and with integrity.

9 He has paid a full ransom for his people.
He has guaranteed his covenant with
them forever.
What a holy, awe-inspiring name he has!

10 Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true
wisdom.
All who obey his commandments will
grow in wisdom.
Praise him forever!

110:2 Hebrew *Zion*. 111 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; after the introductory note of praise, each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

P S A L M **112***

¹ Praise the LORD!

- How joyful are those who fear the LORD
and delight in obeying his commands.
- ² Their children will be successful
everywhere;
an entire generation of godly people will
be blessed.
- ³ They themselves will be wealthy,
and their good deeds will last forever.
- ⁴ Light shines in the darkness for the godly.
They are generous, compassionate, and
righteous.
- ⁵ Good comes to those who lend money
generously
and conduct their business fairly.
- ⁶ Such people will not be overcome by evil.
Those who are righteous will be long
remembered.
- ⁷ They do not fear bad news;
they confidently trust the LORD to care
for them.
- ⁸ They are confident and fearless
and can face their foes triumphantly.
- ⁹ They share freely and give generously to
those in need.
Their good deeds will be remembered
forever.
They will have influence and honor.
- ¹⁰ The wicked will see this and be infuriated.
They will grind their teeth in anger;
they will slink away, their hopes
thwarted.

P S A L M **113**

¹ Praise the LORD!

- Yes, give praise, O servants of the LORD.
Praise the name of the LORD!
- ² Blessed be the name of the LORD
now and forever.
- ³ Everywhere—from east to west—
praise the name of the LORD.
- ⁴ For the LORD is high above
the nations;
his glory is higher than
the heavens.
- ⁵ Who can be compared with the LORD
our God,
who is enthroned on high?
- ⁶ He stoops to look down
on heaven and on earth.
- ⁷ He lifts the poor from the dust
and the needy from the garbage dump.
- ⁸ He sets them among princes,
even the princes of his own people!

- ⁹ He gives the childless woman a family,
making her a happy mother.

Praise the LORD!

P S A L M **114**

- ¹ When the Israelites escaped from Egypt—
when the family of Jacob left that foreign
land—
- ² the land of Judah became God's sanctuary,
and Israel became his kingdom.
- ³ The Red Sea* saw them coming and
hurried out of their way!
The water of the Jordan River turned
away.
- ⁴ The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs!
- ⁵ What's wrong, Red Sea, that made you
hurry out of their way?
What happened, Jordan River, that you
turned away?
- ⁶ Why, mountains, did you skip like rams?
Why, hills, like lambs?
- ⁷ Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the
LORD,
at the presence of the God of Jacob.
- ⁸ He turned the rock into a pool of water;
yes, a spring of water flowed from solid
rock.

P S A L M **115**

- ¹ Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
but to your name goes all the glory
for your unfailing love and faithfulness.
- ² Why let the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
- ³ Our God is in the heavens,
and he does as he wishes.
- ⁴ Their idols are merely things of silver and
gold,
shaped by human hands.
- ⁵ They have mouths but cannot speak,
and eyes but cannot see.
- ⁶ They have ears but cannot hear,
and noses but cannot smell.
- ⁷ They have hands but cannot feel,
and feet but cannot walk,
and throats but cannot make a sound.
- ⁸ And those who make idols are just like
them,
as are all who trust in them.
- ⁹ O Israel, trust the LORD!
He is your helper and your shield.
- ¹⁰ O priests, descendants of Aaron, trust
the LORD!
He is your helper and your shield.

112 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; after the introductory note of praise, each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. 114:3 Hebrew *the sea*; also in 114:5.

- 11 All you who fear the LORD, trust the LORD!
He is your helper and your shield.
- 12 The LORD remembers us and will bless us.
He will bless the people of Israel
and bless the priests, the descendants
of Aaron.
- 13 He will bless those who fear the LORD,
both great and lowly.
- 14 May the LORD richly bless
both you and your children.
- 15 May you be blessed by the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.
- 16 The heavens belong to the LORD,
but he has given the earth to all
humanity.
- 17 The dead cannot sing praises to the LORD,
for they have gone into the silence
of the grave.
- 18 But we can praise the LORD
both now and forever!

Praise the LORD!

P S A L M 116

- 1 I love the LORD because he hears my voice
and my prayer for mercy.
- 2 Because he bends down to listen,
I will pray as long as I have breath!
- 3 Death wrapped its ropes around me;
the terrors of the grave* overtook me.
I saw only trouble and sorrow.
- 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD:
"Please, LORD, save me!"
- 5 How kind the LORD is! How good he is!
So merciful, this God of ours!
- 6 The LORD protects those of childlike faith;
I was facing death, and he saved me.
- 7 Let my soul be at rest again,
for the LORD has been good to me.
- 8 He has saved me from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling.
- 9 And so I walk in the LORD's presence
as I live here on earth!
- 10 I believed in you, so I said,
"I am deeply troubled, LORD."
- 11 In my anxiety I cried out to you,
"These people are all liars!"
- 12 What can I offer the LORD
for all he has done for me?
- 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation
and praise the LORD's name for saving me.
- 14 I will keep my promises to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.
- 15 The LORD cares deeply
when his loved ones die.

- 16 O LORD, I am your servant;
yes, I am your servant, born into your
household;
you have freed me from my chains.
- 17 I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the LORD.
- 18 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people—
- 19 in the house of the LORD
in the heart of Jerusalem.
- Praise the LORD!

P S A L M 117

- 1 Praise the LORD, all you nations.
Praise him, all you people of the earth.
- 2 For he loves us with unfailing love;
the LORD's faithfulness
endures forever.
- Praise the LORD!

P S A L M 118

- 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.
- 2 Let all Israel repeat:
"His faithful love endures forever."
- 3 Let Aaron's descendants, the priests, repeat:
"His faithful love endures forever."
- 4 Let all who fear the LORD repeat:
"His faithful love endures forever."
- 5 In my distress I prayed to the LORD,
and the LORD answered me and set
me free.
- 6 The LORD is for me, so I will have no fear.
What can mere people do to me?
- 7 Yes, the LORD is for me; he will help me.
I will look in triumph at those who
hate me.
- 8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in people.
- 9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes.
- 10 Though hostile nations surrounded me,
I destroyed them all with the
authority of the LORD.
- 11 Yes, they surrounded and
attacked me,
but I destroyed them all with
the authority of the LORD.
- 12 They swarmed around me like bees;
they blazed against me
like a crackling fire.
But I destroyed them all with the
authority of the LORD.
- 13 My enemies did their best to kill me,
but the LORD rescued me.

- 14 The LORD is my strength and my song;
he has given me victory.
- 15 Songs of joy and victory are sung in the
camp of the godly.
The strong right arm of the LORD has
done glorious things!
- 16 The strong right arm of the LORD is raised
in triumph.
The strong right arm of the LORD has
done glorious things!
- 17 I will not die; instead, I will live
to tell what the LORD has done.
- 18 The LORD has punished me severely,
but he did not let me die.
- 19 Open for me the gates where the righteous
enter,
and I will go in and thank the LORD.
- 20 These gates lead to the presence of the
LORD,
and the godly enter there.
- 21 I thank you for answering my prayer
and giving me victory!
- 22 The stone that the builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.
- 23 This is the LORD's doing,
and it is wonderful to see.
- 24 This is the day the LORD has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
- 25 Please, LORD, please save us.
Please, LORD, please give us success.
- 26 Bless the one who comes in the name
of the LORD.
We bless you from the house of the
LORD.
- 27 The LORD is God, shining upon us.
Take the sacrifice and bind it with cords
on the altar.
- 28 You are my God, and I will praise you!
You are my God, and I will exalt you!
- 29 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.

P S A L M **119****Aleph*

- 1 Joyful are people of integrity,
who follow the instructions of the LORD.
- 2 Joyful are those who obey his laws
and search for him with all their hearts.
- 3 They do not compromise with evil,
and they walk only in his paths.
- 4 You have charged us
to keep your commandments carefully.
- 5 Oh, that my actions would consistently
reflect your decrees!

- 6 Then I will not be ashamed
when I compare my life with your
commands.
- 7 As I learn your righteous regulations,
I will thank you by living as I should!
- 8 I will obey your decrees.
Please don't give up on me!

Beth

- 9 How can a young person stay pure?
By obeying your word.
- 10 I have tried hard to find you—
don't let me wander from your
commands.
- 11 I have hidden your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
- 12 I praise you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.
- 13 I have recited aloud
all the regulations you have given us.
- 14 I have rejoiced in your laws
as much as in riches.
- 15 I will study your commandments
and reflect on your ways.
- 16 I will delight in your decrees
and not forget your word.

Gimel

- 17 Be good to your servant,
that I may live and obey
your word.
- 18 Open my eyes to see
the wonderful truths in your
instructions.
- 19 I am only a foreigner in the land.
Don't hide your commands from me!
- 20 I am always overwhelmed
with a desire for your regulations.
- 21 You rebuke the arrogant;
those who wander from your commands
are cursed.
- 22 Don't let them scorn and insult me,
for I have obeyed your laws.
- 23 Even princes sit and speak against me,
but I will meditate on your decrees.
- 24 Your laws please me;
they give me wise advice.

Daleth

- 25 I lie in the dust;
revive me by your word.
- 26 I told you my plans,
and you answered.
Now teach me your decrees.
- 27 Help me understand the meaning of your
commandments,
and I will meditate on your wonderful
deeds.

119 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; there are twenty-two stanzas, one for each successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the eight verses within each stanza begins with the Hebrew letter named in its heading.

28 I weep with sorrow;
encourage me by your word.
29 Keep me from lying to myself;
give me the privilege of knowing your
instructions.
30 I have chosen to be faithful;
I have determined to live by your
regulations.
31 I cling to your laws.
LORD, don't let me be put to shame!
32 I will pursue your commands,
for you expand my understanding.

He

33 Teach me your decrees, O LORD;
I will keep them to the end.
34 Give me understanding and I will obey your
instructions;
I will put them into practice with all my
heart.
35 Make me walk along the path of your
commands,
for that is where my happiness is found.
36 Give me an eagerness for your laws
rather than a love for money!
37 Turn my eyes from worthless things,
and give me life through your word.*
38 Reassure me of your promise,
made to those who fear you.
39 Help me abandon my shameful ways;
for your regulations are good.
40 I long to obey your commandments!
Renew my life with your goodness.

Waw

41 LORD, give me your unfailing love,
the salvation that you promised me.
42 Then I can answer those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.
43 Do not snatch your word of truth from me,
for your regulations are my only hope.
44 I will keep on obeying your instructions
forever and ever.
45 I will walk in freedom,
for I have devoted myself to your
commandments.
46 I will speak to kings about your laws,
and I will not be ashamed.
47 How I delight in your commands!
How I love them!
48 I honor and love your commands.
I meditate on your decrees.

Zayin

49 Remember your promise to me;
it is my only hope.
50 Your promise revives me;
it comforts me in all my troubles.
51 The proud hold me in utter contempt,

but I do not turn away from your
instructions.

52 I meditate on your age-old regulations;
O LORD, they comfort me.
53 I become furious with the wicked,
because they reject your instructions.
54 Your decrees have been the theme of
my songs
wherever I have lived.
55 I reflect at night on who you are, O LORD;
therefore, I obey your instructions.
56 This is how I spend my life:
obeying your commandments.

Heth

57 LORD, you are mine!
I promise to obey your words!
58 With all my heart I want your blessings.
Be merciful as you promised.
59 I pondered the direction of my life,
and I turned to follow your laws.
60 I will hurry, without delay,
to obey your commands.
61 Evil people try to drag me into sin,
but I am firmly anchored to your
instructions.
62 I rise at midnight to thank you
for your just regulations.
63 I am a friend to anyone who fears you—
anyone who obeys your
commandments.
64 O LORD, your unfailing love fills
the earth;
teach me your decrees.

Teth

65 You have done many good things for me,
LORD,
just as you promised.
66 I believe in your commands;
now teach me good judgment and
knowledge.
67 I used to wander off until you
disciplined me;
but now I closely follow your word.
68 You are good and do only good;
teach me your decrees.
69 Arrogant people smear me with lies,
but in truth I obey your commandments
with all my heart.
70 Their hearts are dull and stupid,
but I delight in your instructions.
71 My suffering was good for me,
for it taught me to pay attention to your
decrees.
72 Your instructions are more
valuable to me
than millions in gold and silver.

Yodh

- 73 You made me; you created me.
Now give me the sense to follow your
commands.
- 74 May all who fear you find in me a cause
for joy,
for I have put my hope in your word.
- 75 I know, O LORD, that your regulations
are fair;
you disciplined me because I needed it.
- 76 Now let your unfailing love comfort me,
just as you promised me, your servant.
- 77 Surround me with your tender mercies so
I may live,
for your instructions are my delight.
- 78 Bring disgrace upon the arrogant people
who lied about me;
meanwhile, I will concentrate on your
commandments.
- 79 Let me be united with all who fear you,
with those who know your laws.
- 80 May I be blameless in keeping your decrees;
then I will never be ashamed.

Kaph

- 81 I am worn out waiting for your rescue,
but I have put my hope in your word.
- 82 My eyes are straining to see your promises
come true.
When will you comfort me?
- 83 I am shriveled like a wineskin
in the smoke,
but I have not forgotten to obey
your decrees.
- 84 How long must I wait?
When will you punish those who
persecute me?
- 85 These arrogant people who hate your
instructions
have dug deep pits to trap me.
- 86 All your commands are trustworthy.
Protect me from those who hunt me
down without cause.
- 87 They almost finished me off,
but I refused to abandon your
commandments.
- 88 In your unfailing love, spare my life;
then I can continue to obey your laws.

Lamedh

- 89 Your eternal word, O LORD,
stands firm in heaven.
- 90 Your faithfulness extends to every
generation,
as enduring as the earth you created.
- 91 Your regulations remain true to this day,
for everything serves your plans.
- 92 If your instructions hadn't sustained me
with joy,
I would have died in my misery.

**first steps**
**STUDYING THE BIBLE
KEEPS US SPIRITUALLY
STRONG**

Read PSALM 119:9-18

Although it is good to carry a Bible in your pocket, the best place to carry the Bible is in your heart. Psalm 119 gives a wonderful illustration of what can happen in our lives when we fill our minds with God's Word. This passage gives us at least three good principles regarding the importance of regular Bible study:

1. The Study and Application of God's Word Will Keep Us Pure. If we really study and apply God's Word to our lives, we will be able to live a pure and holy life—even though we live in a blatantly evil world.

2. The Memorization of God's Word Will Keep Us from Sin. When Jesus squared off with the devil for forty days in the wilderness (see Luke 4:1-14, pp. 902-903), he faced serious temptation. His response was simple but effective—he quoted Scripture. Once Scripture is ingrained in our memory, we will be amazed at how often a verse will suddenly come to mind and strengthen our hearts. The early twentieth-century evangelist Billy Sunday used to say of the Bible, "This Book will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from this Book." He was right. The greatest deterrent for sin and temptation is the Word of God stored in our hearts.

3. The Study of God's Laws Will Give Us a Sense of Joy and Peace. Some people view God's laws as a long list of don'ts. But the author of this psalm did not view God's laws as shackles but as a shelter. He understood that God's principles for living were good for him. When we begin to do the same, we will have a greater awareness of God's concern for us as individuals. Then we will see God's laws as walls of protection!

For the next note on "Study the Bible," turn to p. 167.

- ⁹³ I will never forget your commandments,
for by them you give me life.
⁹⁴ I am yours; rescue me!
For I have worked hard at obeying your
commandments.
⁹⁵ Though the wicked hide along the way to
kill me,
I will quietly keep my mind on your laws.
⁹⁶ Even perfection has its limits,
but your commands have no limit.

Mem

- ⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your instructions!
I think about them all day long.
⁹⁸ Your commands make me wiser than my
enemies,
for they are my constant guide.
⁹⁹ Yes, I have more insight than my teachers,
for I am always thinking of your laws.
¹⁰⁰ I am even wiser than my elders,
for I have kept your commandments.
¹⁰¹ I have refused to walk on any evil path,
so that I may remain obedient to
your word.
¹⁰² I haven't turned away from your
regulations,
for you have taught me well.
¹⁰³ How sweet your words taste to me;
they are sweeter than honey.
¹⁰⁴ Your commandments give me
understanding;
no wonder I hate every false way of life.

Nun

- ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.
¹⁰⁶ I've promised it once, and I'll promise
it again:
I will obey your righteous regulations.
¹⁰⁷ I have suffered much, O LORD;
restore my life again as you promised.
¹⁰⁸ LORD, accept my offering of praise,
and teach me your regulations.
¹⁰⁹ My life constantly hangs in the balance,
but I will not stop obeying your
instructions.
¹¹⁰ The wicked have set their traps for me,
but I will not turn from your
commandments.
¹¹¹ Your laws are my treasure;
they are my heart's delight.
¹¹² I am determined to keep your decrees
to the very end.

Samekh

- ¹¹³ I hate those with divided loyalties,
but I love your instructions.
¹¹⁴ You are my refuge and my shield;
your word is my source of hope.
¹¹⁵ Get out of my life, you evil-minded people,

for I intend to obey the commands
of my God.

- ¹¹⁶ LORD, sustain me as you promised, that I
may live!
Do not let my hope be crushed.
¹¹⁷ Sustain me, and I will be rescued;
then I will meditate continually on your
decrees.
¹¹⁸ But you have rejected all who stray from
your decrees.
They are only fooling themselves.
¹¹⁹ You skim off the wicked of the earth like
scum;
no wonder I love to obey your laws!
¹²⁰ I tremble in fear of you;
I stand in awe of your regulations.

Ayin

- ¹²¹ Don't leave me to the mercy of my enemies,
for I have done what is just and right.
¹²² Please guarantee a blessing for me.
Don't let the arrogant oppress me!
¹²³ My eyes strain to see your rescue,
to see the truth of your promise fulfilled.
¹²⁴ I am your servant; deal with me in
unfailing love,
and teach me your decrees.
¹²⁵ Give discernment to me, your servant;
then I will understand your laws.
¹²⁶ LORD, it is time for you to act,
for these evil people have violated your
instructions.
¹²⁷ Truly, I love your commands
more than gold, even the finest gold.
¹²⁸ Each of your commandments is right.
That is why I hate every false way.

Pe

- ¹²⁹ Your laws are wonderful.
No wonder I obey them!
¹³⁰ The teaching of your word gives light,
so even the simple can understand.
¹³¹ I pant with expectation,
longing for your commands.
¹³² Come and show me your mercy,
as you do for all who love your name.
¹³³ Guide my steps by your word,
so I will not be overcome by evil.
¹³⁴ Ransom me from the oppression of evil
people;
then I can obey your commandments.
¹³⁵ Look upon me with love;
teach me your decrees.
¹³⁶ Rivers of tears gush from my eyes
because people disobey your
instructions.

Tsadhe

- ¹³⁷ O LORD, you are righteous,
and your regulations are fair.

- 138 Your laws are perfect
and completely trustworthy.
- 139 I am overwhelmed with indignation,
for my enemies have disregarded your
words.
- 140 Your promises have been thoroughly tested;
that is why I love them so much.
- 141 I am insignificant and despised,
but I don't forget your commandments.
- 142 Your justice is eternal,
and your instructions are perfectly true.
- 143 As pressure and stress bear down on me,
I find joy in your commands.
- 144 Your laws are always right;
help me to understand them so I may live.

Qoph

- 145 I pray with all my heart; answer me, LORD!
I will obey your decrees.
- 146 I cry out to you; rescue me,
that I may obey your laws.
- 147 I rise early, before the sun is up;
I cry out for help and put my hope in
your words.
- 148 I stay awake through the night,
thinking about your promise.
- 149 In your faithful love, O LORD, hear my cry;
let me be revived by following your
regulations.
- 150 Lawless people are coming to attack me;
they live far from your instructions.
- 151 But you are near, O LORD,
and all your commands are true.
- 152 I have known from my earliest days
that your laws will last forever.

Resh

- 153 Look upon my suffering and rescue me,
for I have not forgotten your instructions.
- 154 Argue my case; take my side!
Protect my life as you promised.
- 155 The wicked are far from rescue,
for they do not bother with your decrees.
- 156 LORD, how great is your mercy;
let me be revived by following your
regulations.
- 157 Many persecute and trouble me,
yet I have not swerved from your laws.
- 158 Seeing these traitors makes me sick at heart,
because they care nothing for your word.
- 159 See how I love your commandments, LORD.
Give back my life because of your
unfailing love.
- 160 The very essence of your words is truth;
all your just regulations will stand
forever.

Shin

- 161 Powerful people harass me without cause,
but my heart trembles only at your word.

- 162 I rejoice in your word
like one who discovers a great treasure.
- 163 I hate and abhor all falsehood,
but I love your instructions.
- 164 I will praise you seven times a day
because all your regulations are just.
- 165 Those who love your instructions have
great peace
and do not stumble.
- 166 I long for your rescue, LORD,
so I have obeyed your commands.
- 167 I have obeyed your laws,
for I love them very much.
- 168 Yes, I obey your commandments and laws
because you know everything I do.

Taw

- 169 O LORD, listen to my cry;
give me the discerning mind you
promised.
- 170 Listen to my prayer;
rescue me as you promised.
- 171 Let praise flow from my lips,
for you have taught me your decrees.
- 172 Let my tongue sing about your word,
for all your commands are right.
- 173 Give me a helping hand,
for I have chosen to follow your
commandments.
- 174 O LORD, I have longed for your rescue,
and your instructions are my delight.
- 175 Let me live so I can praise you,
and may your regulations help me.
- 176 I have wandered away like a lost sheep;
come and find me,
for I have not forgotten
your commands.

P S A L M **120***A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.*

- 1 I took my troubles to the LORD;
I cried out to him, and he answered
my prayer.
- 2 Rescue me, O LORD, from liars
and from all deceitful people.
- 3 O deceptive tongue, what will God
do to you?
How will he increase your
punishment?
- 4 You will be pierced with sharp arrows
and burned with glowing coals.
- 5 How I suffer in far-off Meshech.
It pains me to live in distant Kedar.
- 6 I am tired of living
among people who hate peace.
- 7 I search for peace;
but when I speak of peace, they
want war!


cornerstones
**A LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD BRINGS
PEACE OF MIND**
Read PSALM 119:165-168

Some people claim that you can become at peace with yourself. Or they say that we will understand the world better if we accept that what is right

for one person may not be right for everybody. That way, things won't seem so chaotic. But reality says otherwise. For instance, the moral foundation America once had is quickly crumbling. Our streets are characterized by violence, and our families are characterized by turmoil. What is missing?

This passage gives us the missing piece of the puzzle. In order to find "great peace of heart and mind," you must love God's laws. Not only must the Bible become your standard for living, but you must also cherish what it says. Obeying God's laws without a love for the Lawgiver is known as legalism, and you will never be completely satisfied. But obeying God's commands with a love for the Lord brings true liberty, and you will find tremendous peace and assurance.

For the next note on "Peace," turn to p. 1082.

PSALM 121

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- 1 I look up to the mountains—
does my help come from there?
- 2 My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth!
- 3 He will not let you stumble;
the one who watches over you will
not slumber.
- 4 Indeed, he who watches over Israel
never slumbers or sleeps.
- 5 The LORD himself watches over you!
The LORD stands beside you as your
protective shade.
- 6 The sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon at night.
- 7 The LORD keeps you from all harm
and watches over your life.
- 8 The LORD keeps watch over you as you
come and go,
both now and forever.

PSALM 122

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.

- 1 I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD."
- 2 And now here we are,
standing inside your gates, O Jerusalem.
- 3 Jerusalem is a well-built city;
its seamless walls cannot be breached.
- 4 All the tribes of Israel—the LORD's people—
make their pilgrimage here.
They come to give thanks to the name of
the LORD,
as the law requires of Israel.

- 5 Here stand the thrones where judgment
is given,
the thrones of the dynasty of David.

- 6 Pray for peace in Jerusalem.
May all who love this city prosper.
- 7 O Jerusalem, may there be peace within
your walls
and prosperity in your palaces.
- 8 For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say,
"May you have peace."
- 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD
our God,
I will seek what is best for you,
O Jerusalem.

PSALM 123

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- 1 I lift my eyes to you,
O God, enthroned in heaven.
- 2 We keep looking to the LORD our God for
his mercy,
just as servants keep their eyes on their
master,
as a slave girl watches her mistress for
the slightest signal.
- 3 Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy,
for we have had our fill of contempt.
- 4 We have had more than our fill of the
scoffing of the proud
and the contempt of the arrogant.

PSALM 124

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.

- 1 What if the LORD had not been on our side?
Let all Israel repeat:

- ² What if the LORD had not been on our side
when people attacked us?
³ They would have swallowed us alive
in their burning anger.
⁴ The waters would have engulfed us;
a torrent would have overwhelmed us.
⁵ Yes, the raging waters of their fury
would have overwhelmed our very lives.
⁶ Praise the LORD,
who did not let their teeth tear us apart!
⁷ We escaped like a bird from a hunter's trap.
The trap is broken, and we are free!
⁸ Our help is from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

P S A L M **125**
A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- ¹ Those who trust in the LORD are as secure
as Mount Zion;
they will not be defeated but will endure
forever.
² Just as the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people, both
now and forever.
³ The wicked will not rule the land of the
godly,
for then the godly might be tempted to
do wrong.
⁴ O LORD, do good to those who are good,
whose hearts are in tune with you.
⁵ But banish those who turn to crooked ways,
O LORD.
Take them away with those who do evil.
May Israel have peace!

P S A L M **126**
A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- ¹ When the LORD brought back his exiles
to Jerusalem,*
it was like a dream!
² We were filled with laughter,
and we sang for joy.
And the other nations said,
"What amazing things the LORD has
done for them."
³ Yes, the LORD has done amazing things
for us!
What joy!
⁴ Restore our fortunes, LORD,
as streams renew the desert.
⁵ Those who plant in tears
will harvest with shouts of joy.
⁶ They weep as they go to plant their seed,
but they sing as they return with the
harvest.

P S A L M **127**
*A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm
of Solomon.*

- ¹ Unless the LORD builds a house,
the work of the builders is wasted.
Unless the LORD protects a city,
guarding it with sentries will do no good.
² It is useless for you to work so hard
from early morning until late at night,
anxiously working for food to eat;
for God gives rest to his loved ones.
³ Children are a gift from the LORD;
they are a reward from him.
⁴ Children born to a young man
are like arrows in a warrior's hands.
⁵ How joyful is the man whose quiver is full
of them!
He will not be put to shame when he
confronts his accusers at the city
gates.

P S A L M **128**
A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- ¹ How joyful are those who fear the LORD—
all who follow his ways!
² You will enjoy the fruit of your labor.
How joyful and prosperous you will be!
³ Your wife will be like a fruitful grapevine,
flourishing within your home.
Your children will be like vigorous young
olive trees
as they sit around your table.
⁴ That is the LORD's blessing
for those who fear him.
⁵ May the LORD continually bless you
from Zion.
May you see Jerusalem prosper as long
as you live.
⁶ May you live to enjoy your grandchildren.
May Israel have peace!

P S A L M **129**
A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- ¹ From my earliest youth my enemies have
persecuted me.
Let all Israel repeat this:
² From my earliest youth my enemies have
persecuted me,
but they have never defeated me.
³ My back is covered with cuts,
as if a farmer had plowed long furrows.
⁴ But the LORD is good;
he has cut me free from the ropes
of the ungodly.
⁵ May all who hate Jerusalem*
be turned back in shameful defeat.

cornerstones

**SHARING YOUR FAITH RESULTS
IN JOY***Read PSALM 126:5-6*

These verses reflect the restoration of joy in one's life, but they also may hold particular significance for those who long for others to accept Christ.

As Christians, our hearts should break for those who do not know the Lord. The apostle Paul showed this compassion when he wrote, "My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them" (Romans 9:2-3).

This joy of seeing others come to Christ is not only ours on this earth, but it is also reflected in heaven. The Bible tells us, "In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!" (Luke 15:7).

It is not enough to wish for people's salvation. First, your heart must break for their salvation ("plant in tears"). Second, you must actively pray and share your faith ("go to plant their seed"). Third, rejoice when that person turns to God ("harvest with shouts of joy"). Sharing your faith with others is not always easy, but the joy you will experience afterward is well worth the effort. So keep praying for that loved one who doesn't yet know the Lord—the harvest isn't over until the Harvester returns.

For the next note on "joy," turn to p. 1026.

- 6 May they be as useless as grass
on a rooftop,
turning yellow when only
half grown,
7 ignored by the harvester,
despised by the binder.
8 And may those who pass by
refuse to give them this blessing:
"The LORD bless you;
we bless you in the LORD's name."

PSALM **130**
A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- 1 From the depths of despair, O LORD,
I call for your help.
2 Hear my cry, O Lord.
Pay attention to my prayer.
3 LORD, if you kept a record of our sins,
who, O Lord, could ever survive?
4 But you offer forgiveness,
that we might learn to fear you.
5 I am counting on the LORD;
yes, I am counting on him.
I have put my hope in his word.
6 I long for the LORD
more than sentries long for the dawn,
yes, more than sentries long for the dawn.
7 O Israel, hope in the LORD;
for with the LORD there is unfailing love.
His redemption overflows.

- 8 He himself will redeem Israel
from every kind of sin.

PSALM **131**
*A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm
of David.*

- 1 LORD, my heart is not proud;
my eyes are not haughty.
I don't concern myself with matters too
great
or too awesome for me to grasp.
2 Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself,
like a weaned child who no longer cries
for its mother's milk.
Yes, like a weaned child is my soul
within me.
3 O Israel, put your hope in the LORD—
now and always.

PSALM **132**
A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- 1 LORD, remember David
and all that he suffered.
2 He made a solemn promise to the LORD.
He vowed to the Mighty One of Israel,*
3 "I will not go home;
I will not let myself rest.
4 I will not let my eyes sleep
nor close my eyelids in slumber

- ⁵ until I find a place to build a house for the LORD,
a sanctuary for the Mighty One of Israel.”
- ⁶ We heard that the Ark was in Ephrathah;
then we found it in the distant
countryside of Jaar.
- ⁷ Let us go to the sanctuary of the LORD;
let us worship at the footstool of his
throne.
- ⁸ Arise, O LORD, and enter your resting place,
along with the Ark, the symbol of your
power.
- ⁹ May your priests be clothed in godliness;
may your loyal servants sing for joy.
- ¹⁰ For the sake of your servant David,
do not reject the king you have anointed.
- ¹¹ The LORD swore an oath to David
with a promise he will never take back:
“I will place one of your descendants
on your throne.
- ¹² If your descendants obey the terms of
my covenant
and the laws that I teach them,
then your royal line
will continue forever and ever.”
- ¹³ For the LORD has chosen Jerusalem*;
he has desired it for his home.
- ¹⁴ “This is my resting place forever,” he said.
“I will live here, for this is the home I
desired.
- ¹⁵ I will bless this city and make it prosperous;
I will satisfy its poor with food.
- ¹⁶ I will clothe its priests with godliness;
its faithful servants will sing for joy.
- ¹⁷ Here I will increase the power of David;
my anointed one will be a light for my
people.
- ¹⁸ I will clothe his enemies with shame,
but he will be a glorious king.”

P S A L M 133

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.

- ¹ How wonderful and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in harmony!
- ² For harmony is as precious as the
anointing oil
that was poured over Aaron’s head,
that ran down his beard
and onto the border of his robe.
- ³ Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from
Mount Hermon
that falls on the mountains of Zion.
And there the LORD has pronounced his
blessing,
even life everlasting.

P S A L M 134

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- ¹ Oh, praise the LORD, all you servants
of the LORD,
you who serve at night in the house
of the LORD.
- ² Lift up holy hands in prayer,
and praise the LORD.
- ³ May the LORD, who made heaven and earth,
bless you from Jerusalem.*

P S A L M 135

- ¹ Praise the LORD!

Praise the name of the LORD!

- Praise him, you who serve the LORD,
you who serve in the house of the LORD,
in the courts of the house of our God.
- ³ Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
celebrate his lovely name with music.
- ⁴ For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself,
Israel for his own special treasure.
- ⁵ I know the greatness of the LORD—
that our Lord is greater than any
other god.
- ⁶ The LORD does whatever pleases him
throughout all heaven and earth,
and on the seas and in their depths.
- ⁷ He causes the clouds to rise over the whole
earth.
He sends the lightning with the rain
and releases the wind from his
storehouses.
- ⁸ He destroyed the firstborn in each Egyptian
home,
both people and animals.
- ⁹ He performed miraculous signs and
wonders in Egypt
against Pharaoh and all his people.
- ¹⁰ He struck down great nations
and slaughtered mighty kings—
- ¹¹ Sihon king of the Amorites,
Og king of Bashan,
and all the kings of Canaan.
- ¹² He gave their land as an inheritance,
a special possession to his people Israel.
- ¹³ Your name, O LORD, endures forever;
your fame, O LORD, is known to every
generation.
- ¹⁴ For the LORD will give justice to his people
and have compassion on his servants.
- ¹⁵ The idols of the nations are merely things
of silver and gold,
shaped by human hands.

- 16 They have mouths but cannot speak,
and eyes but cannot see.
17 They have ears but cannot hear,
and noses but cannot smell.
18 And those who make idols are just like them,
as are all who trust in them.
19 O Israel, praise the LORD!
O priests—descendants of Aaron—praise
the LORD!
20 O Levites, praise the LORD!
All you who fear the LORD, praise the
LORD!
21 The LORD be praised from Zion,
for he lives here in Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD!

P S A L M 136

- 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.
2 Give thanks to the God of gods.
His faithful love endures forever.
3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords.
His faithful love endures forever.
4 Give thanks to him who alone does mighty
miracles.
His faithful love endures forever.
5 Give thanks to him who made the heavens
so skillfully.
His faithful love endures forever.
6 Give thanks to him who placed the earth
among the waters.
His faithful love endures forever.
7 Give thanks to him who made the heavenly
lights—
His faithful love endures forever.
8 the sun to rule the day,
His faithful love endures forever.
9 and the moon and stars to rule the night.
His faithful love endures forever.
10 Give thanks to him who killed the firstborn
of Egypt.
His faithful love endures forever.
11 He brought Israel out of Egypt.
His faithful love endures forever.
12 He acted with a strong hand and powerful
arm.
His faithful love endures forever.
13 Give thanks to him who parted the
Red Sea.*
His faithful love endures forever.
14 He led Israel safely through,
His faithful love endures forever.
15 but he hurled Pharaoh and his army into
the Red Sea.
His faithful love endures forever.

- 16 Give thanks to him who led his people
through the wilderness.
His faithful love endures forever.
17 Give thanks to him who struck down
mighty kings.
His faithful love endures forever.
18 He killed powerful kings—
His faithful love endures forever.
19 Sihon king of the Amorites,
His faithful love endures forever.
20 and Og king of Bashan.
His faithful love endures forever.
21 God gave the land of these kings as an
inheritance—
His faithful love endures forever.
22 a special possession to his servant Israel.
His faithful love endures forever.
23 He remembered us in our weakness.
His faithful love endures forever.
24 He saved us from our enemies.
His faithful love endures forever.
25 He gives food to every living thing.
His faithful love endures forever.
26 Give thanks to the God of heaven.
His faithful love endures forever.

P S A L M 137

- 1 Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and
wept
as we thought of Jerusalem.*
2 We put away our harps,
hanging them on the branches of poplar
trees.
3 For our captors demanded a song from us.
Our tormentors insisted on a joyful
hymn:
“Sing us one of those songs of
Jerusalem!”
4 But how can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a pagan land?
5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand forget how to play the
harp.
6 May my tongue stick to the roof of my
mouth
if I fail to remember you,
if I don’t make Jerusalem my greatest joy.
7 O LORD, remember what the Edomites did
on the day the armies of Babylon
captured Jerusalem.
“Destroy it!” they yelled.
“Level it to the ground!”
8 O Babylon, you will be destroyed.
Happy is the one who pays you back
for what you have done to us.

⁹ Happy is the one who takes your babies
and smashes them against the rocks!

P S A L M 138

A psalm of David.

- ¹ I give you thanks, O LORD, with all my heart;
I will sing your praises before the gods.
² I bow before your holy Temple as I worship.
I praise your name for your unfailing love
and faithfulness;
for your promises are backed
by all the honor of your name.
³ As soon as I pray, you answer me;
you encourage me by giving me strength.
⁴ Every king in all the earth will thank you,
LORD,
for all of them will hear your words.
⁵ Yes, they will sing about the LORD's ways,
for the glory of the LORD is very great.
⁶ Though the LORD is great, he cares for the
humble,
but he keeps his distance from the proud.
⁷ Though I am surrounded by troubles,
you will protect me from the anger of my
enemies.
You reach out your hand,
and the power of your right hand saves
me.
⁸ The LORD will work out his plans for my
life—
for your faithful love, O LORD, endures
forever.
Don't abandon me, for you made me.

P S A L M 139

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- ¹ O LORD, you have examined my heart
and know everything about me.
² You know when I sit down or stand up.
You know my thoughts even when I'm far
away.
³ You see me when I travel
and when I rest at home.
You know everything I do.
⁴ You know what I am going to say
even before I say it, LORD.
⁵ You go before me and follow me.
You place your hand of blessing on
my head.
⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too great for me to understand!
⁷ I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!
⁸ If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave,* you are there.

- ⁹ If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,
¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
and your strength will support me.
¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me
and the light around me to become
night—
¹² but even in darkness I cannot hide
from you.
To you the night shines as bright as day.
Darkness and light are the same to you.
¹³ You made all the delicate, inner parts of
my body
and knit me together in my mother's
womb.
¹⁴ Thank you for making me so wonderfully
complex!
Your workmanship is marvelous—how
well I know it.
¹⁵ You watched me as I was being formed in
utter seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of
the womb.
¹⁶ You saw me before I was born.
Every day of my life was recorded in your
book.
Every moment was laid out
before a single day had passed.
¹⁷ How precious are your thoughts about me,*
O God.
They cannot be numbered!
¹⁸ I can't even count them;
they outnumber the grains of sand!
And when I wake up,
you are still with me!

- ¹⁹ O God, if only you would destroy the
wicked!
Get out of my life, you murderers!
²⁰ They blaspheme you;
your enemies misuse your name.
²¹ O LORD, shouldn't I hate those who hate you?
Shouldn't I despise those who oppose
you?
²² Yes, I hate them with total hatred,
for your enemies are my enemies.
²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
²⁴ Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting
life.

P S A L M 140

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- ¹ O LORD, rescue me from evil people.
Protect me from those who are violent,


cornerstones
**GOD IS ALL-KNOWING,
EVER-PRESENT, AND ALL-POWERFUL**
Read PSALM 139:1-24

Scripture teaches us about many of God's characteristics. This psalm highlights two of them and alludes to a third.

1. God Is All-Knowing.

God's omniscience is illustrated in verses 1-6—he knows every little detail about what is going on in his creation. Scientists tell us that there are 100 billion stars and more than a billion galaxies. Scripture tells us that God counts the stars and calls them by name (Psalm 147:4, p. 539)! If God is that detail-oriented, you can be assured that he is always aware of what is happening in your life. Because he lives in the eternal realm, he can see the future as clearly as we see the past.

2. God Is Ever-Present. God's omnipresence is beautifully illustrated in verses 7-12. There is no place anyone can go to escape God's presence. This fact is comforting because anywhere we goes we can depend on God to be there to guide, strengthen, and support us. At the same time, God's omnipresence is disconcerting. Because God is always present, he is aware of every sin. God's omnipresence should not only bring us comfort but also motivate us to live lives that are pleasing to him.

3. God Is All-Powerful. God's omnipotence is alluded to in verse 19 where he is asked to destroy the wicked. God's omnipotence is further displayed in other passages of Scripture. Job 42:2 says, "I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you." As the writer of Ecclesiastes acknowledged, "And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose is that people should fear him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). There is no one more powerful than God. He is in ultimate control of the universe—and your life.

For the next note on "Who Is God?" turn to p. 592.

- ² those who plot evil in their hearts
and stir up trouble all day long.
- ³ Their tongues sting like a snake;
the venom of a viper drips from their
lips. *Interlude*
- ⁴ O LORD, keep me out of the hands of the
wicked.
Protect me from those who are violent,
for they are plotting against me.
- ⁵ The proud have set a trap to catch me;
they have stretched out a net;
they have placed traps all along the way.
Interlude
- ⁶ I said to the LORD, "You are my God!"
Listen, O LORD, to my cries for mercy!
- ⁷ O Sovereign LORD, the strong one who
rescued me,
you protected me on the day of battle.
- ⁸ LORD, do not let evil people have their way.
Do not let their evil schemes succeed,
or they will become proud. *Interlude*
- ⁹ Let my enemies be destroyed
by the very evil they have
planned for me.
- ¹⁰ Let burning coals fall down on
their heads.

- Let them be thrown into the fire
or into watery pits from which they
can't escape.
- ¹¹ Don't let liars prosper here in our land.
Cause great disasters to fall on the
violent.
- ¹² But I know the LORD will help those they
persecute;
he will give justice to the poor.
- ¹³ Surely righteous people are praising your
name;
the glory will live in your presence.

PSALM 141
A psalm of David.

- ¹ O LORD, I am calling to you. Please hurry!
Listen when I cry to you for help!
- ² Accept my prayer as incense offered to you,
and my upraised hands as an evening
offering.
- ³ Take control of what I say, O LORD,
and guard my lips.
- ⁴ Don't let me drift toward evil
or take part in acts of wickedness.
Don't let me share in the delicacies
of those who do wrong.

- ⁵ Let the godly strike me!
It will be a kindness!
If they correct me, it is
soothing medicine.
Don't let me refuse it.
- But I pray constantly
against the wicked and their deeds.
- ⁶ When their leaders are thrown down
from a cliff,
the wicked will listen to my words
and find them true.
- ⁷ Like rocks brought up by a plow,
the bones of the wicked will lie scattered
without burial.*
- ⁸ I look to you for help, O Sovereign LORD.
You are my refuge; don't let them kill me.
- ⁹ Keep me from the traps they have set
for me,
from the snares of those who do wrong.
- ¹⁰ Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
but let me escape.

P S A L M 142

A psalm of David, regarding his experience in the cave. A prayer.*

- ¹ I cry out to the LORD;
I plead for the LORD's mercy.
- ² I pour out my complaints before him
and tell him all my troubles.
- ³ When I am overwhelmed,
you alone know the way I should turn.
Wherever I go,
my enemies have set traps for me.
- ⁴ I look for someone to come and help me,
but no one gives me a passing thought!
No one will help me;
no one cares a bit what happens to me.
- ⁵ Then I pray to you, O LORD.
I say, "You are my place of refuge.
You are all I really want in life.
- ⁶ Hear my cry,
for I am very low.
Rescue me from my persecutors,
for they are too strong for me.
- ⁷ Bring me out of prison
so I can thank you.
The godly will crowd around me,
for you are good to me."

P S A L M 143

A psalm of David.

- ¹ Hear my prayer, O LORD;
listen to my plea!
Answer me because you are faithful and
righteous.

- ² Don't put your servant on trial,
for no one is innocent before you.
- ³ My enemy has chased me.
He has knocked me to the ground
and forces me to live in darkness like
those in the grave.
- ⁴ I am losing all hope;
I am paralyzed with fear.
- ⁵ I remember the days of old.
I ponder all your great works
and think about what you
have done.
- ⁶ I lift my hands to you in prayer.
I thirst for you as parched
land thirsts for rain.

Interlude

- ⁷ Come quickly, LORD, and answer me,
for my depression deepens.
Don't turn away from me,
or I will die.
- ⁸ Let me hear of your unending love each
morning,
for I am trusting you.
Show me where to walk,
for I give myself to you.
- ⁹ Rescue me from my enemies, LORD;
I run to you to hide me.
- ¹⁰ Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
May your gracious Spirit lead
me forward
on a firm footing.
- ¹¹ For the glory of your name, O LORD,
preserve my life.
Because of your faithfulness, bring
me out of this distress.
- ¹² In your unending love, silence all my
enemies
and destroy all my foes,
for I am your servant.

P S A L M 144

A psalm of David.

- ¹ Praise the LORD, who is my rock.
He trains my hands for war
and gives my fingers skill for battle.
- ² He is my loving ally and my fortress,
my tower of safety, my rescuer.
He is my shield, and I take refuge in him.
He makes the nations* submit to me.
- ³ O LORD, what are human beings that you
should notice them,
mere mortals that you should think
about them?
- ⁴ For they are like a breath of air;
their days are like a passing shadow.

141:7 Hebrew *scattered at the mouth of Sheol*. 142:TITLE Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.
144:2 Some manuscripts read *my people*.

- 5 Open the heavens, LORD, and come down.
Touch the mountains so they billow
smoke.
- 6 Hurl your lightning bolts and scatter your
enemies!
Shoot your arrows and confuse them!
- 7 Reach down from heaven and rescue me;
rescue me from deep waters,
from the power of my enemies.
- 8 Their mouths are full of lies;
they swear to tell the truth, but they lie
instead.
- 9 I will sing a new song to you, O God!
I will sing your praises with a ten-
stringed harp.
- 10 For you grant victory to kings!
You rescued your servant David from
the fatal sword.
- 11 Save me!
Rescue me from the power of my
enemies.
Their mouths are full of lies;
they swear to tell the truth, but they lie
instead.
- 12 May our sons flourish in their youth
like well-nurtured plants.
May our daughters be like graceful pillars,
carved to beautify a palace.
- 13 May our barns be filled
with crops of every kind.
May the flocks in our fields multiply
by the thousands,
even tens of thousands,
- 14 and may our oxen be loaded down
with produce.
May there be no enemy breaking through
our walls,
no going into captivity,
no cries of alarm in our town squares.
- 15 Yes, joyful are those who live like this!
Joyful indeed are those whose God
is the LORD.
- let them proclaim your power.
- 5 I will meditate* on your majestic, glorious
splendor
and your wonderful miracles.
- 6 Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every
tongue;
I will proclaim your greatness.
- 7 Everyone will share the story of your
wonderful goodness;
they will sing with joy about your
righteousness.
- 8 The LORD is merciful and
compassionate,
slow to get angry and filled with
unfailing love.
- 9 The LORD is good to everyone.
He showers compassion on all his
creation.
- 10 All of your works will thank you, LORD,
and your faithful followers will praise you.
- 11 They will speak of the glory of your
kingdom;
they will give examples of your power.
- 12 They will tell about your
mighty deeds
and about the majesty and glory
of your reign.
- 13 For your kingdom is an everlasting
kingdom.
You rule throughout all generations.
The LORD always keeps his promises;
he is gracious in all he does.*
- 14 The LORD helps the fallen
and lifts those bent beneath their loads.
- 15 The eyes of all look to you in hope;
you give them their food as they need it.
- 16 When you open your hand,
you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every
living thing.
- 17 The LORD is righteous in everything
he does;
he is filled with kindness.
- 18 The LORD is close to all who call on him,
yes, to all who call on him in truth.
- 19 He grants the desires of those
who fear him;
he hears their cries for help and
rescues them.
- 20 The LORD protects all those who love him,
but he destroys the wicked.
- 21 I will praise the LORD,
and may everyone on earth bless his holy
name
forever and ever.

P S A L M **145** *
A psalm of praise of David.

- 1 I will exalt you, my God and King,
and praise your name forever and ever.
- 2 I will praise you every day;
yes, I will praise you forever.
- 3 Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of
praise!
No one can measure his greatness.
- 4 Let each generation tell its children of your
mighty acts;

145 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; each verse (including 13b) begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
145:5 Some manuscripts read *They will speak*. 145:13 The last two lines of 145:13 are not found in many of the ancient manuscripts.

P S A L M **146**

¹ Praise the LORD!

- Let all that I am praise the LORD.
² I will praise the LORD as long as I live.
 I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath.
³ Don't put your confidence in powerful people;
 there is no help for you there.
⁴ When they breathe their last, they return to the earth,
 and all their plans die with them.
⁵ But joyful are those who have the God of Israel* as their helper,
 whose hope is in the LORD their God.
⁶ He made heaven and earth,
 the sea, and everything in them.
 He keeps every promise forever.
⁷ He gives justice to the oppressed
 and food to the hungry.
 The LORD frees the prisoners.
⁸ The LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
 The LORD lifts up those who are weighed down.
 The LORD loves the godly.
⁹ The LORD protects the foreigners among us.
 He cares for the orphans and widows,
 but he frustrates the plans of the wicked.
¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever.
 He will be your God, O Jerusalem,*
 throughout the generations.

Praise the LORD!

P S A L M **147**

¹ Praise the LORD!

- How good to sing praises to our God!
 How delightful and how fitting!
² The LORD is rebuilding Jerusalem
 and bringing the exiles back to Israel.
³ He heals the brokenhearted
 and bandages their wounds.
⁴ He counts the stars
 and calls them all by name.
⁵ How great is our Lord! His power is absolute!
 His understanding is beyond comprehension!
⁶ The LORD supports the humble,
 but he brings the wicked down into the dust.
⁷ Sing out your thanks to the LORD;
 sing praises to our God with a harp.
⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds,
 provides rain for the earth,

and makes the grass grow in mountain pastures.

- ⁹ He gives food to the wild animals
 and feeds the young ravens when they cry.
¹⁰ He takes no pleasure in the strength of a horse
 or in human might.
¹¹ No, the LORD's delight is in those who fear him,
 those who put their hope in his unfailing love.
¹² Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem!
 Praise your God, O Zion!
¹³ For he has strengthened the bars of your gates
 and blessed your children within your walls.
¹⁴ He sends peace across your nation
 and satisfies your hunger with the finest wheat.
¹⁵ He sends his orders to the world—
 how swiftly his word flies!
¹⁶ He sends the snow like white wool;
 he scatters frost upon the ground like ashes.
¹⁷ He hurls the hail like stones.*
 Who can stand against his freezing cold?
¹⁸ Then, at his command, it all melts.
 He sends his winds, and the ice thaws.
¹⁹ He has revealed his words to Jacob,
 his decrees and regulations to Israel.
²⁰ He has not done this for any other nation;
 they do not know his regulations.

Praise the LORD!

P S A L M **148**

¹ Praise the LORD!

- Praise the LORD from the heavens!
 Praise him from the skies!
² Praise him, all his angels!
 Praise him, all the armies of heaven!
³ Praise him, sun and moon!
 Praise him, all you twinkling stars!
⁴ Praise him, skies above!
 Praise him, vapors high above the clouds!
⁵ Let every created thing give praise to the LORD,
 for he issued his command, and they came into being.
⁶ He set them in place forever and ever.
 His decree will never be revoked.
⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth,
 you creatures of the ocean depths,

- ⁸ fire and hail, snow and clouds,*
wind and weather that obey him,
⁹ mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,
¹⁰ wild animals and all livestock,
small scurrying animals and birds,
¹¹ kings of the earth and all people,
rulers and judges of the earth,
¹² young men and young women,
old men and children.
- ¹³ Let them all praise the name of the LORD.
For his name is very great;
his glory towers over the earth and
heaven!
- ¹⁴ He has made his people strong,
honoring his faithful ones—
the people of Israel who are
close to him.

Praise the LORD!

P S A L M **149**

- ¹ Praise the LORD!
Sing to the LORD a new song.
Sing his praises in the assembly of the
faithful.
- ² O Israel, rejoice in your Maker.
O people of Jerusalem,* exult in your
King.
- ³ Praise his name with dancing,
accompanied by tambourine and harp.
- ⁴ For the LORD delights in his people;
he crowns the humble with victory.

148:8 Or *mist, or smoke*. 149:2 Hebrew *Zion*.

- ⁵ Let the faithful rejoice that he honors
them.
Let them sing for joy as they lie on
their beds.
- ⁶ Let the praises of God be in their mouths,
and a sharp sword in their hands—
⁷ to execute vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,
⁸ to bind their kings with shackles
and their leaders with iron chains,
⁹ to execute the judgment written against
them.
This is the glorious privilege of his
faithful ones.

Praise the LORD!

P S A L M **150**

- ¹ Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heaven!
- ² Praise him for his mighty works;
praise his unequalled greatness!
- ³ Praise him with a blast of the ram's horn;
praise him with the lyre and harp!
- ⁴ Praise him with the tambourine and
dancing;
praise him with strings and flutes!
- ⁵ Praise him with a clash of cymbals;
praise him with loud clanging cymbals.
- ⁶ Let everything that breathes sing praises
to the LORD!

Praise the LORD!



John

AUTHOR: JOHN | DATE WRITTEN: A.D. 85–90 | GENRE: GOSPEL

While the emphasis in the other three Gospels centers around the events in the life of Jesus, John often focuses upon the meaning of those events. For instance, while all four Gospels record the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, only John gives us Jesus' message on the "Bread of Life" that followed that miracle.

CHAPTER 1

Prologue: Christ, the Eternal Word

¹ In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

² He existed in the beginning with God.

³ God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through
him.

⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was
created,*
and his life brought light to everyone.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist,* ⁷ to tell
about the light so that everyone might believe
because of his testimony. ⁸ John himself was
not the light; he was simply a witness to tell
about the light. ⁹ The one who is the true light,
who gives light to everyone, was coming into
the world.

¹⁰ He came into the very world he created,
but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹ He came
to his own people, and even they rejected him.
¹² But to all who believed him and accepted
him, he gave the right to become children of
God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical
birth resulting from human passion or plan,
but a birth that comes from God.

¹⁴ So the Word became human* and made
his home among us. He was full of unending
love and faithfulness.* And we have seen his
glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

¹⁵ John testified about him when he shouted

to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking
about when I said, 'Someone is coming after
me who is far greater than I am, for he existed
long before me.'"

¹⁶ From his abundance we have all received
one gracious blessing after another.* ¹⁷ For the
law was given through Moses, but God's unending
love and faithfulness came through Jesus
Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But the
unique One, who is himself God,* is near to the
Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

¹⁹ This was John's testimony when the Jewish
leaders sent priests and Temple assistants* from
Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" ²⁰ He
came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

²¹ "Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are
you Elijah?"

"No," he replied.

"Are you the Prophet we are expecting?""

"No."

²² "Then who are you? We need an answer
for those who sent us. What do you have to say
about yourself?"

²³ John replied in the words of the prophet
Isaiah:

"I am a voice shouting in the wilderness,
'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!'"*

²⁴ Then the Pharisees who had been sent
²⁵ asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Eli-
jah or the Prophet, what right do you have to
baptize?"

²⁶ John told them, "I baptize with* water, but

1:3–4 Or and nothing that was created was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything. 1:5 Or and the darkness has not understood it. 1:6 Greek a man named John. 1:14a Greek became flesh. 1:14b Or grace and truth; also in 1:17. 1:16 Or received the grace of Christ rather than the grace of the law; Greek reads received grace upon grace.

1:18 Some manuscripts read But the one and only Son. 1:19 Greek and Levites. 1:21 Greek Are you the Prophet? See Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5–6. 1:23 Isa 40:3. 1:26 Or in; also in 1:31, 33.

right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. ²⁷ Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."

²⁸ This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

Jesus, the Lamb of God

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' ³¹ I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."

³² Then John testified, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. ³³ I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God.*"

The First Disciples

³⁵ The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.

³⁸ Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them.

They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

³⁹ "Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. ⁴¹ Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ")."

⁴² Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter")."

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me." ⁴⁴ Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown.

⁴⁵ Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses*

and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth."

⁴⁶ "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

"Come and see for yourself," Philip replied.

⁴⁷ As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity."

⁴⁸ "How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."

⁴⁹ Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!"

⁵⁰ Jesus asked him, "Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this."

⁵¹ Then he said, "I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.*"

CHAPTER 2

The Wedding at Cana

The next day* there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. ³ The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother told him, "They have no more wine."

⁴ "Dear woman, that's not our problem," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

⁵ But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶ Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons.* ⁷ Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled, ⁸ he said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions.

⁹ When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. ¹⁰ "A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!"

¹¹ This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

¹² After the wedding he went to Capernaum for a few days with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples.

1:34 Some manuscripts read *the Son of God*. 1:41 *Messiah* (a Hebrew term) and *Christ* (a Greek term) both mean "the anointed one." 1:42 The names *Cephas* (from Aramaic) and *Peter* (from Greek) both mean "rock." 1:45 Greek *Moses in the law*. 1:51 Greek *going up and down on the Son of Man*; see Gen 28:10-17. "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 2:1 Greek *On the third day*; see 1:35, 43. 2:6 Greek *2 or 3 measures* (75 to 113 liters).

Jesus Clears the Temple

¹³It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. ¹⁵Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. ¹⁶Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"

¹⁷Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me."^{*}

¹⁸But the Jewish leaders demanded, "What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it."

¹⁹"All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰"What!" they exclaimed. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?" ²¹But when Jesus said "this temple," he meant his own body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

Jesus and Nicodemus

²³Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him. ²⁴But Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew human nature. ²⁵No one needed to tell him what mankind is really like.

CHAPTER 3

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. ²After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you."

³Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again,^{*} you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

⁴"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

⁵Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.^{*} ⁶Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth

to spiritual life.^{*} ⁷So don't be surprised when I say, 'You^{*} must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

⁹"How are these things possible?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? ¹¹I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony. ¹²But if you don't believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man^{*} has come down from heaven. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.^{*}

¹⁶"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

¹⁸"There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. ¹⁹And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.^{*}"

John the Baptist Exalts Jesus

²²Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people.

²³At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism. ²⁴(This was before John was thrown into prison.) ²⁵A debate broke out between John's disciples and a certain Jew^{*} over ceremonial cleansing. ²⁶So John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one

2:17 Or "Concern for God's house will be my undoing." Ps 69:9.

The Greek word for Spirit can also be translated wind; see 3:8.

word for you is plural; also in 3:12. 3:13 Some manuscripts add who lives in heaven. "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.

3:15 Or everyone who believes will have eternal life in him. 3:21 Or can see God at work in what he is doing.

3:25 Some manuscripts read some Jews.

3:3 Or born from above; also in 3:7. 3:5 Or and spirit.

3:6 Greek what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 3:7 The Greek

3:7 The Greek

3:21 Or can see God at work in what he is doing.

you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us.”

²⁷ John replied, “No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves know how plainly I told you, ‘I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.’ ²⁹ It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. ³⁰ He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

³¹ “He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else.* ³² He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! ³³ Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. ³⁴ For he is sent by God. He speaks God’s words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. ³⁵ The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. ³⁶ And anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment.”

CHAPTER 4

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

Jesus* knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John ² (though Jesus himself didn’t baptize them—his disciples did). ³ So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

⁴ He had to go through Samaria on the way. ⁵ Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. ⁷ Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Please give me a drink.” ⁸ He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

⁹ The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans.* She said to Jesus, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”

¹⁰ Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”

¹¹ “But sir, you don’t have a rope or a bucket,”

she said, “and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? ¹² And besides, do you think you’re greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?”

¹³ Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴ But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

¹⁵ “Please, sir,” the woman said, “give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here to get water.”

¹⁶ “Go and get your husband,” Jesus told her.

¹⁷ “I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied.

Jesus said, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband—¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!”

¹⁹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet. ²⁰ So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim,* where our ancestors worshiped?”

²¹ Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. ²³ But the time is coming—in fact it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. ²⁴ For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

²⁵ The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶ Then Jesus told her, “I AM the Messiah!”*

²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, “What do you want with her?” or “Why are you talking to her?” ²⁸ The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, ²⁹ “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?” ³⁰ So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

³¹ Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something.”

³² But Jesus replied, “I have a kind of food you know nothing about.”

3:31 Some manuscripts do not include *and is greater than anyone else*. 4:1 Some manuscripts read *The Lord*. 4:9 Some manuscripts do not include this sentence. 4:20 Greek on this mountain. 4:26 Or “The ‘I AM’ is here”; or “I am the LORD”; Greek reads “I am, the one speaking to you.” See Exod 3:14.

³³“Did someone bring him food while we were gone?” the disciples asked each other.

³⁴Then Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. ³⁵You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe* for harvest. ³⁶The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike!³⁷ You know the saying, ‘One plants and another harvests.’ And it’s true. ³⁸I sent you to harvest where you didn’t plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest.”

Many Samaritans Believe

³⁹Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!” ⁴⁰When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, ⁴¹long enough for many more to hear his message and believe. ⁴²Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Jesus Heals an Official’s Son

⁴³At the end of the two days, Jesus went on to Galilee. ⁴⁴He himself had said that a prophet is not honored in his own hometown. ⁴⁵Yet the Galileans welcomed him, for they had been in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration and had seen everything he did there.

⁴⁶As he traveled through Galilee, he came to Cana, where he had turned the water into wine. There was a government official in nearby Capernaum whose son was very sick. ⁴⁷When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son, who was about to die.

⁴⁸Jesus asked, “Will you never believe in me unless you see miraculous signs and wonders?”

⁴⁹The official pleaded, “Lord, please come now before my little boy dies.”

⁵⁰Then Jesus told him, “Go back home. Your son will live!” And the man believed what Jesus said and started home.

⁵¹While the man was on his way, some of his servants met him with the news that his son was alive and well. ⁵²He asked them when the boy had begun to get better, and they replied, “Yesterday afternoon at one o’clock his fever

suddenly disappeared!” ⁵³Then the father realized that that was the very time Jesus had told him, “Your son will live.” And he and his entire household believed in Jesus. ⁵⁴This was the second miraculous sign Jesus did in Galilee after coming from Judea.

CHAPTER 5

Jesus Heals a Lame Man

Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. ²Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda,* with five covered porches. ³Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches.* ⁵One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”

⁷“I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”

⁸Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”

⁹Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath, ¹⁰so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! The law doesn’t allow you to carry that sleeping mat!”

¹¹But he replied, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

¹²“Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded.

¹³The man didn’t know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd. ¹⁴But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, “Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you.” ¹⁵Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him.

Jesus Claims to Be the Son of God

¹⁶So the Jewish leaders began harassing* Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules. ¹⁷But Jesus replied, “My Father is always working, and so am I.” ¹⁸So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God.

¹⁹So Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. ²⁰For the Father

4:35 Greek *white*. 5:2 Other manuscripts read *Beth-zatha*; still others read *Bethsaida*. 5:3 Some manuscripts add an expanded conclusion to verse 3 and all of verse 4: *waiting for a certain movement of the water, for an angel of the Lord came from time to time and stirred up the water. And the first person to step in after the water was stirred was healed of whatever disease he had.* 5:16 Or *persecuting*.

loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished. ²¹For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. ²²In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, ²³so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him.

²⁴"I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

²⁵"And I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it's here now, when the dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God. And those who listen will live. ²⁶The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son. ²⁷And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man.* ²⁸Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, ²⁹and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment. ³⁰I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me. Therefore, my judgment is just, because I carry out the will of the one who sent me, not my own will.

Witnesses to Jesus

³¹"If I were to testify on my own behalf, my testimony would not be valid. ³²But someone else is also testifying about me, and I assure you that everything he says about me is true. ³³In fact, you sent investigators to listen to John the Baptist, and his testimony about me was true. ³⁴Of course, I have no need of human witnesses, but I say these things so you might be saved. ³⁵John was like a burning and shining lamp, and you were excited for a while about his message. ³⁶But I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. The Father gave me these works to accomplish, and they prove that he sent me. ³⁷And the Father who sent me has testified about me himself. You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face, ³⁸and you do not have his message in your hearts, because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you.

³⁹"You search the Scriptures because you

think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.

⁴¹"Your approval means nothing to me, ⁴²because I know you don't have God's love within you. ⁴³For I have come to you in my Father's name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them. ⁴⁴No wonder you can't believe! For you gladly honor each other, but you don't care about the honor that comes from the one who alone is God.*

⁴⁵"Yet it isn't I who will accuse you before the Father. Moses will accuse you! Yes, Moses, in whom you put your hopes. ⁴⁶If you really believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. ⁴⁷But since you don't believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

CHAPTER 6

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

After this, Jesus crossed over to the far side of the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberias. ²A huge crowd kept following him wherever he went, because they saw his miraculous signs as he healed the sick. ³Then Jesus climbed a hill and sat down with his disciples around him. ⁴(It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration.) ⁵Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" ⁶He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.

⁷Philip replied, "Even if we worked for months, we wouldn't have enough money* to feed them!"

⁸Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. ⁹"There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?"

¹⁰"Tell everyone to sit down," Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. ¹²After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, "Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted." ¹³So they picked up the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves.

¹⁴When the people saw him* do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!"* ¹⁵When

5:27 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 5:44 Some manuscripts read *from the only One*. 6:7 Greek *Two hundred denarii would not be enough*. A denarius was equivalent to a laborer's full day's wage. 6:14a Some manuscripts read *Jesus*. 6:14b See Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5-6.

Jesus saw that they were ready to force him to be their king, he slipped away into the hills by himself.

Jesus Walks on Water

¹⁶That evening Jesus' disciples went down to the shore to wait for him. ¹⁷But as darkness fell and Jesus still hadn't come back, they got into the boat and headed across the lake toward Capernaum. ¹⁸Soon a gale swept down upon them, and the sea grew very rough. ¹⁹They had rowed three or four miles* when suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water toward the boat. They were terrified, ²⁰but he called out to them, "Don't be afraid. I am here!" ²¹Then they were eager to let him in the boat, and immediately they arrived at their destination!

Jesus, the Bread of Life

²²The next day the crowd that had stayed on the far shore saw that the disciples had taken the only boat, and they realized Jesus had not gone with them. ²³Several boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the Lord had blessed the bread and the people had eaten. ²⁴So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for him. ²⁵They found him on the other side of the lake and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

²⁶Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. ²⁷But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man* can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval."

²⁸They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?"

²⁹Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."

³⁰They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? ³¹After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

³²Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. ³³The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴"Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day."

³⁵Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me. ³⁷However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. ³⁹And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."

⁴¹Then the people* began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven?'"

⁴³But Jesus replied, "Stop complaining about what I said. ⁴⁴For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. ⁴⁵As it is written in the Scriptures,* 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶(Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen him.)

⁴⁷"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸Yes, I am the bread of life! ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. ⁵⁰Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh."

⁵²Then the people began arguing with each other about what he meant. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.

⁵³So Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. ⁵⁴But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷I live because of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, anyone who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever."

6:19 Greek 25 or 30 stadia [4.6 or 5.5 kilometers]. 6:20 Or *The 'I AM' is here*; Greek reads *I am*. See Exod 3:14. 6:27 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 6:31 Exod 16:4; Ps 78:24. 6:41 Greek *Jewish people*; also in 6:52. 6:45 Greek *in the prophets*. Isa 54:13.

⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Many Disciples Desert Jesus

⁶⁰Many of his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

⁶¹Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? ⁶³The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But some of you do not believe me." (For Jesus knew from the beginning which ones didn't believe, and he knew who would betray him.) ⁶⁵Then he said, "That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me."

⁶⁶At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. ⁶⁷Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?"

⁶⁸Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God.*"

⁷⁰Then Jesus said, "I chose the twelve of you, but one is a devil." ⁷¹He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, one of the Twelve, who would later betray him.

CHAPTER 7

Jesus and His Brothers

After this, Jesus traveled around Galilee. He wanted to stay out of Judea, where the Jewish leaders were plotting his death. ²But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, ³and Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! ⁴You can't become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!" ⁵For even his brothers didn't believe in him.

⁶Jesus replied, "Now is not the right time for me to go, but you can go anytime. ⁷The world can't hate you, but it does hate me because I accuse it of doing evil. ⁸You go on. I'm not going* to this festival, because my time has not yet come." ⁹After saying these things, Jesus remained in Galilee.

Jesus Teaches Openly at the Temple

¹⁰But after his brothers left for the festival, Jesus also went, though secretly, staying out of public view. ¹¹The Jewish leaders tried to find him at the festival and kept asking if anyone

had seen him. ¹²There was a lot of grumbling about him among the crowds. Some argued, "He's a good man," but others said, "He's nothing but a fraud who deceives the people." ¹³But no one had the courage to speak favorably about him in public, for they were afraid of getting in trouble with the Jewish leaders.

¹⁴Then, midway through the festival, Jesus went up to the Temple and began to teach. ¹⁵The people* were surprised when they heard him. "How does he know so much when he hasn't been trained?" they asked.

¹⁶So Jesus told them, "My message is not my own; it comes from God who sent me. ¹⁷Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own. ¹⁸Those who speak for themselves want glory only for themselves, but a person who seeks to honor the one who sent him speaks truth, not lies. ¹⁹Moses gave you the law, but none of you obeys it! In fact, you are trying to kill me."

²⁰The crowd replied, "You're demon possessed! Who's trying to kill you?"

²¹Jesus replied, "I did one miracle on the Sabbath, and you were amazed. ²²But you work on the Sabbath, too, when you obey Moses' law of circumcision. (Actually, this tradition of circumcision began with the patriarchs, long before the law of Moses.) ²³For if the correct time for circumcising your son falls on the Sabbath, you go ahead and do it so as not to break the law of Moses. So why should you be angry with me for healing a man on the Sabbath? ²⁴Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly."

Is Jesus the Messiah?

²⁵Some of the people who lived in Jerusalem started to ask each other, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? ²⁶But here he is, speaking in public, and they say nothing to him. Could our leaders possibly believe that he is the Messiah? ²⁷But how could he be? For we know where this man comes from. When the Messiah comes, he will simply appear; no one will know where he comes from."

²⁸While Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he called out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I come from. But I'm not here on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don't know him. ²⁹But I know him because I come from him, and he sent me to you."

³⁰Then the leaders tried to arrest him; but no one laid a hand on him, because his time* had not yet come.

6:69 Other manuscripts read you are the Christ, the Holy One of God; still others read you are the Christ, the Son of God; and still others read you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. 7:8 Some manuscripts read not yet going. 7:15 Greek Jewish people. 7:30 Greek his hour.

³¹Many among the crowds at the Temple believed in him. "After all," they said, "would you expect the Messiah to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?"

³²When the Pharisees heard that the crowds were whispering such things, they and the leading priests sent Temple guards to arrest Jesus. ³³But Jesus told them, "I will be with you only a little longer. Then I will return to the one who sent me. ³⁴You will search for me but not find me. And you cannot go where I am going."

³⁵The Jewish leaders were puzzled by this statement. "Where is he planning to go?" they asked. "Is he thinking of leaving the country and going to the Jews in other lands?" Maybe he will even teach the Greeks! ³⁶What does he mean when he says, 'You will search for me but not find me,' and 'You cannot go where I am going?'"

Jesus Promises Living Water

³⁷On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'"^{*} ³⁹(When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given,^{*} because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

Division and Unbelief

⁴⁰When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, "Surely this man is the Prophet we've been expecting."^{*} ⁴¹Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others said, "But he can't be! Will the Messiah come from Galilee?" ⁴²For the Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born."^{*} ⁴³So the crowd was divided about him. ⁴⁴Some even wanted him arrested, but no one laid a hand on him.

⁴⁵When the Temple guards returned without having arrested Jesus, the leading priests and Pharisees demanded, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

⁴⁶"We have never heard anyone speak like this!" the guards responded.

⁴⁷"Have you been led astray, too?" the Pharisees mocked. ⁴⁸"Is there a single one of us rulers or Pharisees who believes in him?" ⁴⁹This foolish crowd follows him, but they are ignorant of the law. God's curse is on them!"

⁵⁰Then Nicodemus, the leader who had met

with Jesus earlier, spoke up. ⁵¹"Is it legal to convict a man before he is given a hearing?" he asked.

⁵²They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Search the Scriptures and see for yourself—no prophet ever comes* from Galilee!"

(The most ancient Greek manuscripts do not include John 7:53–8:11.)

⁵³Then the meeting broke up, and everybody went home.

CHAPTER 8

A Woman Caught in Adultery

Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ²but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. ³As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

⁴"Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"

⁶They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. ⁷They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" ⁸Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

⁹When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?"

¹¹"No, Lord," she said.

And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

Jesus, the Light of the World

¹²Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

¹³The Pharisees replied, "You are making those claims about yourself! Such testimony is not valid."

¹⁴Jesus told them, "These claims are valid even though I make them about myself. For I

7:35 Or the Jews who live among the Greeks? 7:37–38 Or "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from the heart of anyone who believes in me.'" 7:39 Some manuscripts read But as yet there was no Spirit. Still others read But as yet there was no Holy Spirit. 7:40 See Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5–6. 7:42 See Mic 5:2. 7:52 Some manuscripts read the prophet does not come.

know where I came from and where I am going, but you don't know this about me. ¹⁵You judge me by human standards, but I do not judge anyone. ¹⁶And if I did, my judgment would be correct in every respect because I am not alone. The Father* who sent me is with me. ¹⁷Your own law says that if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact.* ¹⁸I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other."

¹⁹"Where is your father?" they asked.

Jesus answered, "Since you don't know who I am, you don't know who my Father is. If you knew me, you would also know my Father." ²⁰Jesus made these statements while he was teaching in the section of the Temple known as the Treasury. But he was not arrested, because his time* had not yet come.

The Unbelieving People Warned

²¹Later Jesus said to them again, "I am going away. You will search for me but will die in your sin. You cannot come where I am going."

²²The people* asked, "Is he planning to commit suicide? What does he mean, 'You cannot come where I am going?'"

²³Jesus continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You belong to this world; I do not. ²⁴That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be,* you will die in your sins."

²⁵"Who are you?" they demanded.

Jesus replied, "The one I have always claimed to be.* ²⁶I have much to say about you and much to condemn, but I won't. For I say only what I have heard from the one who sent me, and he is completely truthful." ²⁷But they still didn't understand that he was talking about his Father.

²⁸So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will understand that I AM he.* I do nothing on my own but say only what the Father taught me. ²⁹And the one who sent me is with me—he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him." ³⁰Then many who heard him say these things believed in him.

Jesus and Abraham

³¹Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. ³²And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

³³"But we are descendants of Abraham,"

they said. "We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, 'You will be set free?'"

³⁴Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. ³⁵A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free. ³⁷Yes, I realize that you are descendants of Abraham. And yet some of you are trying to kill me because there's no room in your hearts for my message. ³⁸I am telling you what I saw when I was with my Father. But you are following the advice of your father."

³⁹"Our father is Abraham!" they declared.

"No," Jesus replied, "for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example.* ⁴⁰Instead, you are trying to kill me because I told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. ⁴¹No, you are imitating your real father."

They replied, "We aren't illegitimate children! God himself is our true Father."

⁴²Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me. ⁴³Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! ⁴⁴For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me! ⁴⁶Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin? And since I am telling you the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don't listen because you don't belong to God."

⁴⁸The people retorted, "You Samaritan devil! Didn't we say all along that you were possessed by a demon?"

⁴⁹"No," Jesus said, "I have no demon in me. For I honor my Father—and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰And though I have no wish to glorify myself, God is going to glorify me. He is the true judge. ⁵¹I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!"

⁵²The people said, "Now we know you are possessed by a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died, but you say, 'Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!' ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

8:16 Some manuscripts read *The One*. 8:17 See Deut 19:15. 8:20 Greek *his hour*. 8:22 Greek *Jewish people*; also in 8:31, 48, 52, 57. 8:24 Greek *unless you believe that I am*. See Exod 3:14. 8:25 Or *Why do I speak to you at all?* 8:28 Greek *When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am*. "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 8:39 Some manuscripts read *if you are really the children of Abraham, follow his example*.

⁵⁴Jesus answered, "If I want glory for myself, it doesn't count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, 'He is our God,'⁵⁵ but you don't even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know him and obey him. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷The people said, "You aren't even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?"

⁵⁸Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!"⁵⁹ At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.

CHAPTER 9

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ²"Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?"

³"It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. ⁴We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us.* The night is coming, and then no one can work. ⁵But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. ⁷He told him, "Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam" (Siloam means "sent"). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

⁸His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹Some said he was, and others said, "No, he just looks like him!"

But the beggar kept saying, "Yes, I am the same one!"

¹⁰They asked, "Who healed you? What happened?"

¹¹He told them, "The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.' So I went and washed, and now I can see!"

¹²"Where is he now?" they asked.

"I don't know," he replied.

¹³Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, ¹⁴because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. ¹⁵The Pharisees asked the man all about it. So he told them, "He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!"

¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath." Others said, "But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?" So there was a deep division of opinion among them.

¹⁷Then the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, "What's your opinion about this man who healed you?"

The man replied, "I think he must be a prophet."

¹⁸The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. ¹⁹They asked them, "Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?"

²⁰His parents replied, "We know this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹but we don't know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself." ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. ²³That's why they said, "He is old enough. Ask him."

²⁴So for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, "God should get the glory for this,* because we know this man Jesus is a sinner."

²⁵"I don't know whether he is a sinner," the man replied. "But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!"

²⁶"But what did he do?" they asked. "How did he heal you?"

²⁷"Look!" the man exclaimed. "I told you once. Didn't you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

²⁸Then they cursed him and said, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! ²⁹We know God spoke to Moses, but we don't even know where this man comes from."

³⁰"Why, that's very strange!" the man replied. "He healed my eyes, and yet you don't know where he comes from? ³¹We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. ³²Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he couldn't have done it."

³⁴"You were born a total sinner!" they answered. "Are you trying to teach us?" And they threw him out of the synagogue.

8:54 Some manuscripts read *your God*. 8:57 Some manuscripts read *How can you say Abraham has seen you?* 8:58 Or *before Abraham was even born, I have always been alive*; Greek reads *before Abraham was, I am*. See Exod 3:14. 9:4 Other manuscripts read *I must quickly carry out the tasks assigned me by the one who sent me*; still others read *We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent me*. 9:24 Or *Give glory to God, not to Jesus*; Greek reads *Give glory to God*.

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?*

³⁶The man answered, “Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him.”

³⁷“You have seen him,” Jesus said, “and he is speaking to you!”

³⁸“Yes, Lord, I believe!” the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.

³⁹Then Jesus told him,* “I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see* that they are blind.”

⁴⁰Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, “Are you saying we’re blind?”

⁴¹“If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty,” Jesus replied. “But you remain guilty because you claim you can see.

CHAPTER 10

The Good Shepherd and His Sheep

“I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber!² But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.⁴ After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice.⁵ They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.”

⁶Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn’t understand what he meant,⁷ so he explained it to them: “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.⁸ All who came before me* were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them.⁹ Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved.* They will come and go freely and will find good pastures.¹⁰ The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.¹² A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don’t belong to him and he isn’t their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock.¹³ The hired hand runs away because he’s work-

ing only for the money and doesn’t really care about the sheep.

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me,¹⁵ just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.¹⁶ I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷“The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again.¹⁸ No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.”

¹⁹When he said these things, the people* were again divided in their opinions about him.²⁰ Some said, “He’s demon possessed and out of his mind. Why listen to a man like that?”

²¹Others said, “This doesn’t sound like a man possessed by a demon! Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Jesus Claims to Be the Son of God

²²It was now winter, and Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of Hanukkah, the Festival of Dedication.²³ He was in the Temple, walking through the section known as Solomon’s Colonnade.²⁴ The people surrounded him and asked, “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

²⁵Jesus replied, “I have already told you, and you don’t believe me. The proof is the work I do in my Father’s name.²⁶ But you don’t believe me because you are not my sheep.²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me,²⁹ for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else.* No one can snatch them from the Father’s hand.³⁰ The Father and I are one.”

³¹Once again the people picked up stones to kill him.³² Jesus said, “At my Father’s direction I have done many good works. For which one are you going to stone me?”

³³They replied, “We’re stoning you not for any good work, but for blasphemy! You, a mere man, claim to be God.”

³⁴Jesus replied, “It is written in your own Scriptures* that God said to certain leaders of the people, ‘I say, you are gods!’*³⁵ And you know that the Scriptures cannot be altered. So if those people who received God’s message

9:35 Some manuscripts read *the Son of God?* “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 9:38-39a Some manuscripts do not include “Yes, Lord, I believe!” the man said. And he worshiped Jesus. Then Jesus told him. 9:39b Greek *those who see*. 10:8 Some manuscripts do not include *before me*. 10:9 Or *will find safety*. 10:19 Greek *Jewish people*; also in 10:24, 31. 10:29 Other manuscripts read *what my Father has given me is more powerful than anything*; still others read *regarding that which my Father has given me, he is greater than all*. 10:34a Greek *your own law*. 10:34b Ps 82:6.

were called 'gods,' ³⁶why do you call it blasphemy when I say, 'I am the Son of God'? After all, the Father set me apart and sent me into the world. ³⁷Don't believe me unless I carry out my Father's work. ³⁸But if I do his work, believe in the evidence of the miraculous works I have done, even if you don't believe me. Then you will know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father."

³⁹Once again they tried to arrest him, but he got away and left them. ⁴⁰He went beyond the Jordan River near the place where John was first baptizing and stayed there awhile. ⁴¹And many followed him. "John didn't perform miraculous signs," they remarked to one another, "but everything he said about this man has come true." ⁴²And many who were there believed in Jesus.

CHAPTER 11

The Raising of Lazarus

A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. ²This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair.* Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. ³So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick."

⁴But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this." ⁵So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, ⁶he stayed where he was for the next two days. ⁷Finally, he said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

⁸But his disciples objected. "Rabbi," they said, "only a few days ago the people* in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?"

⁹Jesus replied, "There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. ¹⁰But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light."

¹¹Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up."

¹²The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!" ¹³They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died.

¹⁴So he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead.

¹⁵And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him."

¹⁶Thomas, nicknamed the Twin,* said to his



first steps

YOU DON'T NEED ANY TRAINING TO SHARE

Read JOHN 9:1-41

Perhaps one of the biggest reasons many Christians haven't shared their faith is that they feel inadequate. You might say, "I am not qualified to speak for God! He could never use me." In reality, once you invite Jesus Christ into your life as Savior and Lord, you can begin to tell others about your newfound faith.

This passage tells the story of a blind man whose sight was restored when Jesus touched his eyes. After Jesus healed this man, certain religious rulers known as Pharisees challenged him, asking him some rather complex questions about Jesus. The man's response was classic. He said, "I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!"

In many ways, we as believers are like this formerly blind man. We, too, were once blinded by the power and deception of sin. Scripture tells us that "Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe" and made them "unable to see the glorious light of the Good News" (2 Corinthians 4:4). But one day God lovingly "opened our eyes" to see our real spiritual need, and we responded to the message of the gospel.

We may not yet be great scholars of Scripture, but we still know more about the gospel than many, and we can start with that. Like that blind man, we can say to others, "Once I was blind, but now I can see. . . ." As we study the Bible on a regular basis, we will be able to answer many of the questions people have about our faith.

For the next note on "Share Your Faith," turn to p. 979.

11:2 This incident is recorded in chapter 12. 11:8 Greek *Jewish people*; also in 11:19, 31, 33, 36, 45, 54.

11:16 Greek *Thomas, who was called Didymus*.

fellow disciples, "Let's go, too—and die with Jesus."

¹⁷When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. ¹⁸Bethany was only a few miles* down the road from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. ²⁰When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

²³Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴"Yes," Martha said, "he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day."

²⁵Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life.* Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

²⁷"Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God." ²⁸Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you."

²⁹So Mary immediately went to him.

³⁰Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. ³¹When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. ³²When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him,* and he was deeply troubled. ³⁴"Where have you put him?" he asked them.

They told him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Then Jesus wept. ³⁶The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!" ³⁷But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

³⁸Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. ³⁹"Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, "Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible."

⁴⁰Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?" ⁴¹So they

rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. ⁴²You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me." ⁴³Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

The Plot to Kill Jesus

⁴⁵Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen. ⁴⁶But some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷Then the leading priests and Pharisees called the high council* together. "What are we going to do?" they asked each other. "This man certainly performs many miraculous signs. ⁴⁸If we allow him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple* and our nation."

⁴⁹Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time,* said, "You don't know what you're talking about! ⁵⁰You don't realize that it's better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed."

⁵¹He did not say this on his own; as high priest at that time he was led to prophesy that Jesus would die for the entire nation. ⁵²And not only for that nation, but to bring together and unite all the children of God scattered around the world.

⁵³So from that time on, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus' death. ⁵⁴As a result, Jesus stopped his public ministry among the people and left Jerusalem. He went to a place near the wilderness, to the village of Ephraim, and stayed there with his disciples.

⁵⁵It was now almost time for the Jewish Passover celebration, and many people from all over the country arrived in Jerusalem several days early so they could go through the purification ceremony before Passover began. ⁵⁶They kept looking for Jesus, but as they stood around in the Temple, they said to each other, "What do you think? He won't come for Passover, will he?" ⁵⁷Meanwhile, the leading priests and Pharisees had publicly ordered that anyone seeing Jesus must report it immediately so they could arrest him.

CHAPTER 12

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—

^{11:18} Greek *was about 15 stadia* (about 2.8 kilometers). ^{11:25} Some manuscripts do not include *and the life*. ^{11:33} Or *he was angry in his spirit*. ^{11:47} Greek *the Sanhedrin*. ^{11:48} Or *our position*; Greek reads *our place*. ^{11:49} Greek *that year*; also in 11:51.

the man he had raised from the dead.² A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate* with him.³ Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar* of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, ⁵ "That perfume was worth a year's wages.* It should have been sold and the money given to the poor."⁶ Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself.

⁷ Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial.⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

⁹ When all the people* heard of Jesus' arrival, they flocked to see him and also to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead.¹⁰ Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too,¹¹ for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them* and believed in Jesus.

Jesus' Triumphant Entry

¹² The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors¹³ took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted,

"Praise God!*
Blessings on the one who comes in the
name of the LORD!
Hail to the King of Israel!"*

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said:

¹⁵ "Don't be afraid, people of Jerusalem.*
Look, your King is coming,
riding on a donkey's colt."*

¹⁶ His disciples didn't understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realized that these things had been written about him.

¹⁷ Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others* about it.¹⁸ That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign.¹⁹ Then the Pharisees said to each other,

"There's nothing we can do. Look, everyone* has gone after him!"

Jesus Predicts His Death

²⁰ Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration²¹ paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, "Sir, we want to meet Jesus."²² Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, "Now the time has come for the Son of Man* to enter into his glory.²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives.²⁵ Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity.²⁶ Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

²⁷ "Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But this is the very reason I came!²⁸ Father, bring glory to your name."

Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, "I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again."²⁹ When the crowd heard the voice, some thought it was thunder, while others declared an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Then Jesus told them, "The voice was for your benefit, not mine.³¹ The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out.³² And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."³³ He said this to indicate how he was going to die.

³⁴ The crowd responded, "We understood from Scripture* that the Messiah would live forever. How can you say the Son of Man will die? Just who is this Son of Man, anyway?"

³⁵ Jesus replied, "My light will shine for you just a little longer. Walk in the light while you can, so the darkness will not overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going.³⁶ Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light."

After saying these things, Jesus went away and was hidden from them.

The Unbelief of the People

³⁷ But despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, most of the people still did not

12:2 Or *who reclined*. 12:3 Greek *took 1 litra* [327 grams]. 12:5 Greek *worth 300 denarii*. A denarius was equivalent to a laborer's full day's wage. 12:9 Greek *Jewish people*; also in 12:11. 12:11 Or *had deserted their traditions*; Greek reads *had deserted*. 12:13a Greek *Hosanna*, an exclamation of praise adapted from a Hebrew expression that means "save now." 12:13b Ps 118:25-26; Zeph 3:15. 12:15a Greek *daughter of Zion*. 12:15b Zech 9:9. 12:17 Greek *were testifying*. 12:19 Greek *the world*. 12:23 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 12:34 Greek *from the law*.

believe in him. ³⁸This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted:

“LORD, who has believed our message?
To whom has the LORD revealed his
powerful arm?”*

³⁹But the people couldn't believe, for as Isaiah also said,

⁴⁰“The Lord has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts—
so that their eyes cannot see,
and their hearts cannot understand,
and they cannot turn to me
and have me heal them.”*

⁴¹Isaiah was referring to Jesus when he said this, because he saw the future and spoke of the Messiah's glory. ⁴²Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. ⁴³For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.

⁴⁴Jesus shouted to the crowds, “If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. ⁴⁵For when you see me, you are seeing the one who sent me. ⁴⁶I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. ⁴⁷I will not judge those who hear me but don't obey me, for I have come to save the world and not to judge it. ⁴⁸But all who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken. ⁴⁹I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it. ⁵⁰And I know his commands lead to eternal life; so I say whatever the Father tells me to say.”

CHAPTER 13

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. ²It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas,* son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. ⁴So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

12:38 Isa 53:1. 12:40 Isa 6:10. 13:1 Or *he showed them the full extent of his love*. 13:2 Or *the devil had already intended for Judas*. 13:10 Some manuscripts do not include *except for the feet*. 13:18 Ps 41:9. 13:19 Or *that the 'I AM' has come; or that I am the LORD*; Greek reads *that I am*. See Exod 3:14. 13:21 Greek *was troubled in his spirit*. 13:23 Greek *was reclining on Jesus' bosom*. The “disciple Jesus loved” was probably John.

⁶When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

⁷Jesus replied, “You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.”

⁸“No,” Peter protested, “you will never ever wash my feet!”

Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me.”

⁹Simon Peter exclaimed, “Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!”

¹⁰Jesus replied, “A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet,* to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

¹²After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing?” ¹³You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

¹⁸“I am not saying these things to all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this fulfills the Scripture that says, ‘The one who eats my food has turned against me.’* ¹⁹I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I AM the Messiah.* ²⁰I tell you the truth, anyone who welcomes my messenger is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me.”

²¹Now Jesus was deeply troubled,* and he exclaimed, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!”

²²The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean. ²³The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table.* ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to him to ask, “Who's he talking about?” ²⁵So that disciple leaned over to Jesus and asked, “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶Jesus responded, “It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl.” And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷When Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, “Hurry and do what you're going to do.” ²⁸None

of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant. ²⁹Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. ³⁰So Judas left at once, going out into the night.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

³¹As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, "The time has come for the Son of Man* to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him. ³²And since God receives glory because of the Son,* he will soon give glory to the Son. ³³Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going. ³⁴So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

³⁶Simon Peter asked, "Lord, where are you going?"

And Jesus replied, "You can't go with me now, but you will follow me later."

³⁷"But why can't I come now, Lord?" he asked. "I'm ready to die for you."

³⁸Jesus answered, "Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter—before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.

CHAPTER 14

Jesus, the Way to the Father

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ²There is more than enough room in my Father's home.* If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going."

⁵"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is.* From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"

⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

13:31 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.

13:32 Some manuscripts do not include *And since God receives glory because of the Son.* 14:2a *Or There are many rooms in my Father's house.* 14:2b *Or If this were not so, I would have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you.* Some manuscripts read *If this were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you.* 14:7 Some manuscripts read *If you have really known me, you will know who my Father is.*



first steps

GOD GIVES HOPE TO OUR TROUBLED HEARTS

Read JOHN 14:1-7

Have you ever felt troubled and uncertain about your future? Have you ever felt God was unaware of your world turning upside down? The disciples may have been experiencing these feelings when Jesus gave them this message. He had just told them that he was going to leave them, and they were extremely concerned. Yet he tells them to not be troubled and gives them three reasons why they should have peace in their hearts:

1. We Can Take God at His Word. When Jesus said, "Trust in God, and trust also in me," he was reminding his disciples to trust in God's Word (verse 1). Scripture had spoken of both Jesus' impending crucifixion *and* his resurrection. Somehow they had missed that. Sometimes we forget to look at the whole picture when our circumstances seem overwhelming. But we must remember that the words found in these pages will "never disappear" (Matthew 24:35).

2. We Are Going to Heaven. The next time you face some kind of difficulty, be it physical, emotional, or spiritual, put it in perspective—remember that you are going to heaven (verse 2). Your trials are only temporary. When in the presence of the Lord, there will be no more fear, death, pain, or sorrow.

3. Jesus Is Coming Back for Us. Notice that Jesus says, "I will come and get you" (verse 3). The Lord is not merely going to send for us. He is going to personally escort us to the Father's house. The Bible tells us to "encourage each other with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18). In the midst of your trials, remember that God cares for you so much that he is coming back so that you can be with him forever.

To begin the next reading track, turn to p. A45.



cornerstones

WHO WILL ENTER HEAVEN?

Read JOHN 14:2-6

Hollywood has often depicted the gates of heaven as the place where you plead your case in order to gain entrance. In this passage,

Jesus clearly explains that the only ones who will enter heaven will be those who have accepted him as the way, the truth, and the life—not those who have performed the greatest number of good deeds.

Heaven is not a court but a prepared place for prepared people. If you are a Christian, your reservation for heaven was made the moment you received Christ. And when it comes to accommodations, you don't need to worry, because Jesus himself promised to prepare a place for you.

The Bible tells us to prepare to meet our God. Is your reservation in place?

For the next note on "What Is Heaven?" turn to p. 1050.

⁹Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. ¹¹Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

¹²"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. ¹³You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵"If you love me, obey* my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,* who will never leave you. ¹⁷He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.* ¹⁸No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. ¹⁹Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. ²⁰When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."

²²Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the other dis-

ciple with that name) said to him, "Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?"

²³Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. ²⁴Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me. ²⁵I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. ²⁶But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

²⁷"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. ²⁸Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, who is greater than I am. ²⁹I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe.

³⁰"I don't have much more time to talk to you, because the ruler of this world approaches. He has no power over me, ³¹but I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father. Come, let's be going.

CHAPTER 15

Jesus, the True Vine

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce

14:15 Other manuscripts read *you will obey*; still others read *you should obey*. 14:16 Or *Comforter*, or *Encourager*, or *Counselor*. Greek reads *Paraclete*; also in 14:26. 14:17 Some manuscripts read *and is in you*.

even more. ³You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ¹²This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

The World's Hatred

¹⁸"If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. ¹⁹The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. ²⁰Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. ²¹They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me. ²²They would not be guilty if I had not come and spoken to them. But now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³Anyone who hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴If I hadn't done such miraculous signs among them that no one else could do, they would not be guilty. But as it is, they have seen everything I did, yet they still hate me and my Father. ²⁵This fulfills what is written in their Scriptures*: 'They hated me without cause.'

15:25 Greek in their law. Pss 35:19; 69:4.



first steps

A DISCIPLE ABIDES IN CHRIST

Read JOHN 15:1-17

Jesus knows that his true followers desire to live productive, fulfilling, joy-filled lives. In this passage, he lays out four predominant characteristics of a growing disciple:

1. A Disciple Stays Close to the Master.

Jesus encourages us to remain in him (verses 4-5). Another way to translate that is "to abide in him." The word *abide* signifies a permanent position. It means that you let your roots grow deep into your relationship with Jesus, allowing him to fill every part of your life every day. If you maintain this unbroken fellowship with God, your lifestyle will change.

2. A Disciple Is Fruitful.

Just as a branch can only be fruitful when attached to the vine, we can only be productive when we draw our strength from Jesus (verses 6, 16). The Bible describes this fruit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (see Galatians 5:22-23, p. 1062).

3. A Disciple Obeys the Master. Another clear sign that you are Christ's disciple is your obedience to the principles and guidelines found in the Bible (verse 10). Only then will you discover what it means to live in God's love.

4. A Disciple Loves Others. Jesus gave us the ultimate example of love by laying down his life for us. He, in essence, is asking us to do nothing less. That may not mean actually dying, but it may mean placing someone else's needs before our own.

In verse 11 we find Jesus' reason for sharing these principles: He wants us to be filled with joy. If you try to find happiness through the pursuit of worldly things, it will elude you. The only way to find happiness is through the pursuit of God. If you prioritize your life as Jesus has laid out in these verses, then "your joy will overflow."

For the next note on "Live as a Disciple," turn to p. 1143.

cornerstones

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS IN OUR LIVES

Read JOHN 14:15-17

The Bible uses three different Greek prepositions in the New Testament to describe the different ways in which the Holy Spirit works in

our lives. This verse shows two of these ways, and a third can be found elsewhere in Scripture:

1. He Works with Us as Nonbelievers (*para*). Prior to our conversion to faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and reveals Christ as the answer (see John 16:8, p. 956). Some might dismiss his prodding as that of one's conscience. Yet it is the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes to our terminally sinful condition, exposing our need to turn our lives over to Jesus Christ.

2. He Comes into Our Lives When We Turn to Christ (*en*). Once we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and invite him into our lives, the Holy Spirit comes and sets up residence, so to speak. First, he starts the process of salvation in our heart. Jesus said, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of . . . the Spirit" (John 3:5). Second, he assures us that we have done the right thing. Scripture says, "For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children" (Romans 8:16). Now he can begin changing us from the inside out and develop the new nature within us.

3. He Will Come upon Us to Empower Us as Believers (*epi*). Jesus describes the dynamic empowering of the Holy Spirit upon our lives in Luke 24:49, where he said, "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised." This is what the early Christians experienced in Acts chapter 2, and it dramatically emboldened their witness for Jesus Christ. This power is available to believers today. Scripture says of the giving of his Spirit, "This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God" (Acts 2:39).

For the next note on "Who Is the Holy Spirit?" turn to p. 974.

²⁶"But I will send you the Advocate*—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. ²⁷And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.

CHAPTER 16

"I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith. ²For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. ³This is because they have never known the Father or me. ⁴Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning. I didn't tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

⁵"But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. ⁶Instead, you grieve because of what I've told you. ⁷But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate* won't

come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. ⁹The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. ¹⁰Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. ¹¹Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.

¹²"There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. ¹⁵All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

Sadness Will Be Turned to Joy

¹⁶"In a little while you won't see me anymore. But a little while after that, you will see me again."

¹⁷Some of the disciples asked each other, "What does he mean when he says, 'In a little

15:26 Or *Comforter*, or *Encourager*, or *Counselor*. Greek reads *Paraclete*. 16:7 Or *Comforter*, or *Encourager*, or *Counselor*. Greek reads *Paraclete*.

while you won't see me, but then you will see me,' and 'I am going to the Father'? ¹⁸And what does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand."

¹⁹Jesus realized they wanted to ask him about it, so he said, 'Are you asking yourselves what I meant? I said in a little while you won't see me, but a little while after that you will see me again. ²⁰I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy. ²¹It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. ²²So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy. ²³At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. ²⁴You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.

²⁵"I have spoken of these matters in figures of speech, but soon I will stop speaking figuratively and will tell you plainly all about the Father. ²⁶Then you will ask in my name. I'm not saying I will ask the Father on your behalf, ²⁷for the Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from God.* ²⁸Yes, I came from the Father into the world, and now I will leave the world and return to the Father."

²⁹Then his disciples said, "At last you are speaking plainly and not figuratively. ³⁰Now we understand that you know everything, and there's no need to question you. From this we believe that you came from God."

³¹Jesus asked, "Do you finally believe? ³²But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. ³³I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

CHAPTER 17

The Prayer of Jesus

After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ²For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God,



first steps

LIVE IN GOD'S LOVE

Read JOHN 15:9-11

A portion of Jesus' last message to his disciples before his death is recorded here. In preparation for his departure, Jesus emphasized his love for them and how that love should affect their lives. He wanted them to realize that they could experience true and lasting joy in their walk with God—even if he could not personally be with them. For that reason This intimate message and command from Christ applies to us today as well. In this text Jesus gives four simple points that will enable us to live in his love:

1. Realize That You Have the Love of Jesus.

Jesus is not simply some authoritative figure who demands our respect. He is a personal being—fully God and fully human—who loved us so much that he died in our place. Knowing that Jesus loves you frees you to love him in return. Because we love Jesus, we will obey his commands, as God requires us to do.

2. Live within God's Love by Obeying His Commands. One of the earmarks of a true follower of Christ is obedience. It is easy to boast of our great love for God or the wonderful affection and devotion we feel toward him. But the way to prove your love for Jesus is to obey his commands. Obeying his commands out of obligation rather than love can produce resentment toward him. That is because there is no joy in mere obligation. But obeying Jesus out of love produces joy.

3. Follow Jesus' Example. Jesus is our perfect model of obedience. Pay careful attention to how Jesus obeyed his heavenly Father throughout the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

4. Experience the Reward of Obedience: Overflowing Joy. An obedient Christian is a happy Christian. If you want more joy in your life, make sure that you are following the guidelines God has given you in his Word.

Do you find it hard to obey God and his principles? If so, it is probably time to reexamine your priorities and make sure that getting to know your Creator is right at the top of the list. Then you will discover the joy that comes from living in God's love every day.

For the next note on "Obey God," turn to p. 1019.

and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. ⁴I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

⁶"I have revealed you* to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, ⁸for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.

⁹"My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. ¹⁰All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name;* now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹²During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me.* I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

¹³"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

²⁰"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

²²"I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. ²⁴Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

²⁵"O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."

CHAPTER 18

Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested

After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. ²Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. ³The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove.

⁴Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked.

⁵"Jesus the Nazarene,"* they replied.

"I AM he,"* Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) ⁶As Jesus said "I AM he," they all drew back and fell to the ground! ⁷Once more he asked them, "Who are you looking for?"

And again they replied, "Jesus the Nazarene."

⁸"I told you that I AM he," Jesus said. "And since I am the one you want, let these others go." ⁹He did this to fulfill his own statement: "I did not lose a single one of those you have given me."*

¹⁰Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave. ¹¹But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?"

Jesus at the High Priest's House

¹²So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up. ¹³First they took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time.* ¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had told the other Jewish leaders, "It's better that one man should die for the people."

Peter's First Denial

¹⁵Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. ¹⁶Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to

17:6 Greek *have revealed your name*; also in 17:26. 17:11 Some manuscripts read *you have given me these [disciples]*.

17:12 Some manuscripts read *I protected those you gave me, by the power of your name*. 18:5a Or *Jesus of Nazareth*; also in 18:7. 18:5b Or "The 'I AM' is here"; or "I am the LORD"; Greek reads *I am*; also in 18:6, 8. See Exod 3:14. 18:9 See John 6:39 and 17:12. 18:13 Greek *that year*.

the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?"

"No," he said, "I am not."

¹⁸Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

¹⁹Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰Jesus replied, "Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people* gather. I have not spoken in secret. ²¹Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said."

²²Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" he demanded.

²³Jesus replied, "If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I'm speaking the truth, why are you beating me?"

²⁴Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Peter's Second and Third Denials

²⁵Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "No, I am not."

²⁶But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" ²⁷Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

Jesus' Trial before Pilate

²⁸Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor.* His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. ²⁹So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?"

³⁰"We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!" they retorted.

³¹"Then take him away and judge him by your own law," Pilate told them.

"Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied. ³²(This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die.*)

18:20 Greek *Jewish people*; also in 18:38. **18:28** Greek *to the Praetorium*; also in 18:33. **18:32** See John 12:32-33.



first steps

GOD'S SPIRIT WILL GUIDE YOU

Read JOHN 16:13-15

The work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian is multidimensional. We are told that, among other things, the Holy Spirit "joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children" (Romans 8:16). In this passage, we see that the Holy Spirit serves as a teacher and a guide.

The Holy Spirit Will Help Us Understand the Bible. Before you became a Christian, understanding the Bible may have been like walking around with blinders on. But those blinders you once had were taken off, so to speak, when the Holy Spirit came into your heart. The Holy Spirit teaches you the truth of the Scripture, helping you grasp hard-to-understand passages.

The Holy Spirit Will Reveal More and More about God and Jesus. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that one of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. The moment you invited Jesus into your heart, God's Spirit began to help you grasp the awesome, praiseworthy attributes of Jesus. Those who do not have a personal relationship with Christ cannot understand the full glory of God, because they do not have the Holy Spirit's assistance.

The Holy Spirit wants to be actively involved in your life, helping you grow in the knowledge of God and his Word so that you can better understand God's will for your life. Every time you open the Bible, pray for the Holy Spirit to show you how the passages you read can apply to your life.

For the next note on "Live in God's Power," turn to p. 967.

³³Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him.

³⁴Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?"

³⁵"Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?"

³⁶Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

³⁷Pilate said, "So you are a king?"

Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

³⁸"What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime. ³⁹But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this 'King of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰But they shouted back, "No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!" (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

CHAPTER 19

Jesus Sentenced to Death

Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. ²The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him. ³"Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, as they slapped him across the face.

⁴Pilate went outside again and said to the people, "I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty." ⁵Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Look, here is the man!"

⁶When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"Take him yourselves and crucify him," Pilate said. "I find him not guilty."

⁷The Jewish leaders replied, "By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God."

⁸When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. ⁹He took Jesus back into the headquarters* again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. ¹⁰"Why don't you talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?"

¹¹Then Jesus said, "You would have no power

over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."

¹²Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, "If you release this man, you are no 'friend of Caesar.'"* Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar."

¹³When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*). ¹⁴It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people,* "Look, here is your king!"

¹⁵"Away with him," they yelled. "Away with him! Crucify him!"

"What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back.

¹⁶Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion

So they took Jesus away. ¹⁷Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, *Golgotha*). ¹⁸There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹And Pilate posted a sign on the cross that read, "Jesus of Nazareth,* the King of the Jews." ²⁰The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it.

²¹Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, "Change it from 'The King of the Jews' to 'He said, I am King of the Jews.'"

²²Pilate replied, "No, what I have written, I have written."

²³When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

²⁴So they said, "Rather than tearing it apart, let's throw dice* for it." This fulfilled the Scripture that says, "They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing."* So that is what they did.

²⁵Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." ²⁷And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home.

The Death of Jesus

²⁸Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty."^{*} ²⁹A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. ³⁰When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and released his spirit.

³¹It was the day of preparation, and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was the Passover). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down. ³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. ³³But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. ³⁴One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. ³⁵(This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also can believe.)* ³⁶These things happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures that say, "Not one of his bones will be broken,"^{*} ³⁷and "They will look on the one they pierced."^{*}

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take down Jesus' body. When Pilate gave permission, Joseph came and took the body away. ³⁹With him came Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds* of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth. ⁴¹The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb, never used before. ⁴²And so, because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover* and since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

CHAPTER 20

The Resurrection

Early on Sunday morning,* while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ²She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

19:28 See Pss 22:15; 69:21. 19:35 Some manuscripts read *can continue to believe*. 19:36 Exod 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20. 19:37 Zech 12:10. 19:39 Greek *100 litras* [32.7 kilograms]. 19:42 Greek *because of the Jewish day of preparation*. 20:1 Greek *On the first day of the week*. 20:19 Greek *In the evening of that day, the first day of the week*.

³Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. ⁴They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. ⁸Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—⁹for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then they went home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. ¹²She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³"Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

¹⁴She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. ¹⁵"Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶"Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

¹⁷"Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹That Sunday evening* the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁰As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."

²²Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive anyone's sins,



cornerstones

OUR LOVE FOR GOD PREPARES US FOR SERVICE

Read JOHN 21:15-17

Peter knew that he had let Jesus down when he denied him three times prior to the Crucifixion. But Peter also knew that Jesus had forgiven him.

Jesus tested Peter by asking him the searching question, “Do you love me?” three times.

In the original language of this text, Peter’s response to Jesus’ questions has great significance. When Jesus posed the questions, he had basically asked, “Peter, do you love me with a sacrificial, committed love?” But Peter responded with a different word for “love.” Peter essentially said, “Lord, I like you. I love you as a friend.”

At least Peter was honest. He told Jesus the truth about his commitment. Interestingly enough, Jesus still enlisted Peter in his service, to care for his sheep. Jesus just wanted Peter to affirm his devotion before giving him directions for ministry. As this story implies, we must love God before we can serve him faithfully. Do you love God?

Here are five ways to tell if you really love God and are growing in that love for him: If you love God,

1. You Will Long for Personal Communion with Him. Can you relate to the words of the psalmist, “As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1)? When you really love God, you will delight in praising and worshiping him because your heart will overflow with love for God. And this love will cause you to look forward to spending time with him and his people.

2. You Will Love the Things He Loves. We know what God loves by what he has declared in his Word, the Bible. So if you love God, you will love his Word. Bible study will not be a drudgery, but a delight.

3. You Will Hate What He Hates. As the Lord’s nature becomes your nature, his likes and dislikes become your likes and dislikes. His outlook becomes your outlook. We know from his Word that he hates sin. If we love him, then we should also hate sin.

4. You Will Long for His Return. Jesus described himself as a bridegroom (Mark 2:19). His bride is the church—the body of believers (Ephesians 5:23-29). When Jesus returns, he will be united with his bride. Therefore, if you love the Lord, you will long for his return as a bride longs for her bridegroom.

5. You Will Keep His Commandments. Jesus says, “If you love me, obey my commandments” (John 14:15). Though it is impossible for any of us who loves God to go on an endless course of sin, we will still occasionally fall into individual sins. But if we love God, we will repent of those sins and seek his forgiveness, and our lifestyle will conform to the truths we find in his Word.

Do you love the Lord? Like Peter, you may be tempted to believe that you have no love for Jesus when you sin. Maybe you feel that God could never use you in his service again. Be honest with God; then start rebuilding that relationship. As you reaffirm your love for him, God will open up opportunities for you to serve him and share that love with others. A committed heart leads to committed service.

For the next note on “Love,” turn to p. 1142.

they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Jesus Appears to Thomas

²⁴One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin),* was not with the others

20:24 Greek *Thomas, who was called Didymus.*

when Jesus came. ²⁵They told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”

²⁶Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"

²⁸"My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed.

²⁹Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."

Purpose of the Book

³⁰The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may continue to believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

CHAPTER 21

Epilogue: Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee.* This is how it happened. ²Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin),* Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

³Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

⁴At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. ⁵He called out, "Fellows,* have you caught any fish?"

"No," they replied.

⁶Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

⁷Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. ⁸The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards* from shore. ⁹When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

¹⁰"Bring some of the fish you've just caught,"

Jesus said. ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn.

¹²"Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. ¹⁴This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

¹⁵After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?*"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

¹⁶Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

¹⁷A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep."

¹⁸"I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others* will dress you and take you where you don't want to go." ¹⁹Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me."

²⁰Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, "Lord, who will betray you?" ²¹Peter asked Jesus, "What about him, Lord?"

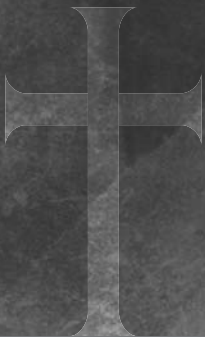
²²Jesus replied, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me." ²³So the rumor spread among the community of believers* that this disciple wouldn't die. But that isn't what Jesus said at all. He only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

²⁴This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate.

²⁵Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

20:31 Some manuscripts read *that you may believe*. 21:1 Greek *Sea of Tiberias*, another name for the Sea of Galilee.

21:2 Greek *Thomas, who was called Didymus*. 21:5 Greek *Children*. 21:8 Greek *200 cubits* [90 meters]. 21:15 Or *more than these others do?* 21:18 Some manuscripts read *and another one*. 21:23 Greek *the brothers*.



Romans

AUTHOR: PAUL | DATE WRITTEN: A.D. 58 | GENRE: EPISTLE

This epistle contains some of the prime secrets of the Christian life. It is a hard-hitting diagnosis of the primary source of man's problems—sin. It also shows the futility of thinking that the answers to our problems lie within ourselves.

CHAPTER 1 *Greetings from Paul*

This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. ²God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. ³The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, ⁴and he was shown to be* the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.* He is Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵Through Christ, God has given us the privilege* and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

⁶And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

God's Good News

⁸Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. ⁹God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart* by spreading the Good News about his Son.

¹⁰One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. ¹¹For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow

strong in the Lord. ¹²When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

¹³I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters,* that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles. ¹⁴For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world,* to the educated and uneducated alike. ¹⁵So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.* ¹⁷This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."*

God's Anger at Sin

¹⁸But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.* ¹⁹They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

²¹Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what

1:4a Or *and was designated*. 1:4b Or *by the Spirit of holiness; or in the new realm of the Spirit*. 1:5 Or *the grace*. 1:9 Or *in my spirit*. 1:13 Greek *brothers*. 1:14 Greek *to Greeks and barbarians*. 1:16 Greek *also the Greek*. 1:17 Or "The righteous will live by faith." Hab 2:4. 1:18 Or *who, by their wickedness, prevent the truth from being known*.

God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²²Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³And instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. ²⁵They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

²⁸Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. ²⁹Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. ³⁰They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. ³¹They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. ³²They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

CHAPTER 2

God's Judgment of Sin

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. ²And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. ³Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? ⁴Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

⁵But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is

coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶He will judge everyone according to what they have done. ⁷He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. ⁸But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. ⁹There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.* ¹⁰But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.

¹²When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written law. And the Jews, who do have God's law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. ¹³For merely listening to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. ¹⁴Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. ¹⁵They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. ¹⁶And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life.

The Jews and the Law

¹⁷You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. ¹⁸You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. ¹⁹You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. ²⁰You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

²¹Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? ²²You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? ²³You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. ²⁴No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."*

²⁵The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an

2:9 Greek *also for the Greek*; also in 2:10. 2:22 Greek *do you steal from temples?* 2:24 Isa 52:5 (Greek version).



BIG QUESTIONS

What Happens to Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

Read ROMANS 1:18-20

Sometimes the person who asks this question is not so much concerned about those who have never heard the gospel. Rather, this person may be more concerned about trying to put up a smoke screen to keep you—the Christian—from showing his or her need for God. We might remind that person that God is loving and compassionate, and that he will deal fairly and justly with those who have never heard the gospel. But the person who asks you this question needs to recognize that knowledge brings responsibility. Those who know the truth of the gospel will be held accountable.

As we know from the Bible, God will judge us according to what we know of him (see Luke 12:48, p. 919). We will not be held accountable for what we do not know. Still, that does not excuse us from all responsibility. Otherwise we might say, "Ignorance is bliss." But this is not to say that the person who has not heard of Jesus will never know of him.

We, as humans, no matter where we live on God's earth, were born with a soul, an emptiness, a sense that life should have meaning and purpose. In spite of that spiritual longing, we have disregarded God and his Word. But

if we are truly seeking God, he will reveal himself to us. We find proof of this in Acts 10:1-48 (pp. 979-80). There, a man named Cornelius, a religious man who constantly prayed to God, asked the Lord to reveal himself to him. Although Cornelius may have heard of Jesus Christ, he did not know God's plan for salvation. But that did not stop God from answering his prayer by sending the apostle Peter to preach the gospel to him. When Cornelius heard that wonderful message, he believed!

The Bible tells us that God is unchanging (see Malachi 3:6, p. 832; and James 1:17, p. 1125). He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. If he heard Cornelius's prayer, he will also hear the prayers of those who do not know him but desire to.

For the next "Big Question" note, turn to p. 1007.

uncircumcised Gentile. ²⁶And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God declare them to be his own people? ²⁷In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's law but don't obey it.

²⁸For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. ²⁹No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise* from God, not from people.

2:29 Or receives praise. 3:2 Greek the oracles of God. 3:4 Ps 51:4 (Greek version).

CHAPTER 3 God Remains Faithful

Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision? ²Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.*

³True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful? ⁴Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about him,

"You will be proved right in what you say, and you will win your case in court."*

⁵“But,” some might say, “our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn’t it unfair, then, for him to punish us?” (This is merely a human point of view.)⁶ Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would he be qualified to judge the world?⁷ “But,” someone might still argue, “how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?”⁸ And some people even slander us by claiming that we say, “The more we sin, the better it is!” Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

All People Are Sinners

⁹Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles,* are under the power of sin.¹⁰ As the Scriptures say,

“No one is righteous—
not even one.

¹¹ No one is truly wise;
no one is seeking God.

¹² All have turned away;
all have become useless.

No one does good,
not a single one.”*

¹³ “Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.

Their tongues are filled with lies.”

“Snake venom drips from their lips.”*

¹⁴ “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”*

¹⁵ “They rush to commit murder.

¹⁶ Destruction and misery always follow them.

¹⁷ They don’t know where to find peace.”*

¹⁸ “They have no fear of God at all.”*

¹⁹ Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.²⁰ For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

Christ Took Our Punishment

²¹ But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses* and the prophets long ago.²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

3:9 Greek or *Greeks*. 3:10-12 Pss 14:1-3; 53:1-3 (Greek version). 3:13 Pss 5:9 (Greek version); 140:3. 3:14 Ps 10:7 (Greek version). 3:15-17 Isa 59:7-8. 3:18 Ps 36:1. 3:21 Greek in the law. 3:30 Greek *whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised*. 4:3 Gen 15:6. 4:7-8 Ps 32:1-2 (Greek version).

²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.²⁴ Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past,²⁶ for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

²⁷ Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith.²⁸ So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

²⁹ After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn’t he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is.³⁰ There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.*³¹ Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

CHAPTER 4

The Faith of Abraham

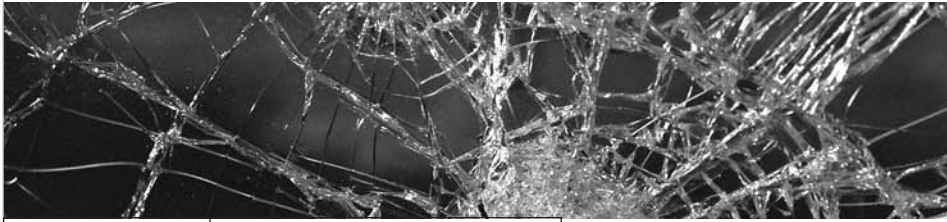
Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God?² If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God’s way.³ For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.”*

⁴ When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned.⁵ But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.⁶ David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it:

⁷ “Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sins are put out of sight.

⁸ Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of
sin.”*

⁹ Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is



BIG QUESTIONS

If God Is So Good, Why Do Bad Things Happen to His People?

Read ROMANS 5:1-5

Sickness, war, accidents, natural disasters, tragedies—they come to the just and the unjust, the Christian and the non-Christian, the moral and the immoral. Yet, if God is so good and all-powerful, why doesn't he just wipe out evil things in this world? This question often arises after any tragedy, but especially when it affects people who you would think should be "immune" to such things.

In addressing this question, it is important to remember that God originally created the world perfect. But he also gave man the freedom to obey or disobey. When Adam sinned, death and suffering became an inevitable part of life (Romans 5:12). Yet, as Christian thinker C. S. Lewis observed, it is idle for us to speculate about the *origin* of evil. The problem we all face is the *fact* of evil. The only

solution to the fact of evil is God's solution, Jesus Christ [Paul Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1966), p. 72].

How is Jesus Christ the solution to the fact of evil? The moment you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, you entered into the master plan that God has for you. Though it is true that you may not know what the future holds, you know who holds the future. And he has promised that all things work together for good to those that love God (see Romans 8:28, p. 1013). Not just the good things, but all things. As Scripture says, "Everything serves [God's] plans" (Psalm 119:91).

That is easy to say when things are going smoothly. But when something unex-

pected comes into the picture, we may wonder if God is paying attention. That is when we need to realize that God is painting on a large canvas. He is looking at the big picture. We only see what is in front of us at the given moment.

God will allow many events to come into our life—good things, bad things, things that make sense, things that make no sense at all. But every one of these incidents in our lives serves as a part of his plan for us. Tragedy in itself is not good. But God can take tragedy and hardship and use them for his glory. As God's children, we know that everything that happens to us first goes through his screen of protection. And he will never give us more than we can handle (see 1 Corinthians 10:13, p. 1036). For that reason we can follow the advice in Romans 5:3 and rejoice. We have the assurance that God is working in our lives to strengthen and develop our character. More important, he will never leave our side (see Hebrews 13:5, p. 1123).

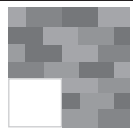
For the next "Big Question" note, turn to p. 1017.

it also for uncircumcised Gentiles?* Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith.¹⁰ But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!

¹¹ Circumcision was a sign that Abraham al-

ready had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith.¹² And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have

4:9 Greek is *this blessing only for the circumcised, or is it also for the uncircumcised?*



cornerstones

OUR LIVES SHOULD SHOW THAT GOD IS AT WORK IN OUR HEARTS

Read ROMANS 7:4

While we still live on this side of heaven, we will always struggle between the desire to obey God and the desire to follow our sinful instincts. Even

the apostle Paul knew what it was like to struggle with sin. In the verses surrounding this text, he describes the six keys to winning this battle and living a life that not only pleases God, but shows that God is working in our heart:

1. Admit the Power of Sin in Your Life (see Romans 7:14, p. 1012). Recognize that you have that combustible nature within you, a vulnerability to the enticements of sin. If we fail to see our potential weaknesses, we are even more vulnerable to fall to them. The Bible warns against such an attitude, saying, “If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

2. Realize That You Are Powerless to Change on Your Own (see Romans 7:18, p. 1012). Your sinful nature is the source of the problem. You will never “master” sin and live a life pleasing to God on your own. Apart from God, you can do nothing.

3. Become “Fed Up” with Your Condition and Cry for Help (see Romans 7:24, p. 1012). You cannot control evil in your life by simply determining to do so. You have to come to the end of yourself and ask for God’s help in this struggle.

4. Accept Your Freedom (see Romans 7:25, p. 1012). Take the hand of help that is offered to you by Jesus.

5. Accept God’s Forgiveness and Lack of Condemnation (see Romans 8:1-2, p. 1012). Because of your unique union with Christ, God will forgive you—not condemn you—when you acknowledge your failures, struggles, and broken commitments.

6. Cut the Instinctive Actions of Your Sinful Nature (see Romans 8:3-8, p. 1012). The only way to stop committing instinctive sinful actions is to stop living by your sinful nature and start living by the power of the Holy Spirit. How do you do this? As Romans 8:6 implies, you must relinquish control of your mind to the Spirit. When you do this, you will be “controlled by the Holy Spirit” and “think about things that please the Spirit” (Romans 8:5).

You will always have the potential to sin. But God has given you the power to overcome sin through his Holy Spirit. The key to drawing on his power is to be obedient to the Holy Spirit.

For the next note on “Faith and Works,” turn to p. 1128.

the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³Clearly, God’s promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God’s law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. ¹⁴If God’s promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. ¹⁵For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

¹⁶So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham’s. For Abraham is the father of all who believe.

4:17 Gen 17:5. 4:18 Gen 15:5.

¹⁷That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, “I have made you the father of many nations.”* This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

¹⁸Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!”* ¹⁹And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.

²⁰Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he

promises. ²²And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded ²⁴for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

CHAPTER 5

Faith Brings Joy

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. ²Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

³We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. ⁵And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

⁶When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. ¹⁰For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. ¹¹So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

Adam and Christ Contrasted

¹²When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. ¹³Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. ¹⁴Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. ¹⁵But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought



first steps

**GOD'S SPIRIT
WILL HELP YOU
OVERCOME SIN**

Read ROMANS 8:9-14

This powerful passage of Scripture contains some critical truths we need to know about letting the Holy Spirit lead our lives. Remember, once you became a Christian, God gave you his Holy Spirit to help you live out your faith, guide your steps, empower your witness, and, as this passage attests, overcome sin. Look at four key points the apostle Paul makes here:

1. You Are Controlled by a New Nature.

Your old, sinful nature will still try to get a hand on the steering wheel. But now your new nature is in the driver's seat, and your old nature has become like an annoying backseat driver. You can either give in to your old nature's nagging and bad directions, or you can ignore it and let the Holy Spirit direct your path.

2. Even Though You Will Face Physical Death, You Will Not Face Spiritual Death. As a believer, physical death is simply a transition to eternal life in heaven. You have been spared from spiritual death, which leads to everlasting torment and hell (see Revelation 21:8, p. 1171). This important fact should reassure you when the devil tries to throw doubts your way.

3. The Same Spirit of God That Raised Jesus from the Dead Resides in You. Did you catch that? The Holy Spirit, who had the power to raise Jesus from the dead, now lives in you! If that is indeed true—and God's Word says it is—just think of the supernatural power you now have in your life to resist sin!

4. We Do Not Have to Give In to Our Sinful Nature and Urges. Paul wasn't talking about New Year's resolutions here. If we try to live a morally upright, godly life in our own strength, we will fail—and fail miserably. But, if we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to help us, we will be overcomers.

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A41.

cornerstones

LIVE TO PLEASE GOD

Read ROMANS 8:5-8

Living to please God may seem like a daunting task. And for some, it is. They struggle to live up to a list of do's and don'ts. They try to obtain God's

favor through acts of kindness and compassion. They attempt to "appease" God for their sinful behavior by going to church or making a confession. But this passage—in fact, this entire chapter in Romans—lets you know that it *is* possible to live a life that is pure and pleasing to God.

The beginning verses of this chapter explain that once we enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, God frees us from the vicious circle of sin and death through the power of his Holy Spirit. This terminology illustrates the basis of our freedom: In essence, the Holy Spirit you received by accepting Jesus Christ into your life has made you a slave of Jesus Christ—not a slave of your sinful nature.

The apostle Paul often identified himself as a slave of Jesus Christ in his writings. He used the word *doulos*, which means "servant by choice." This word was readily understood by those in the Roman culture. A "doulos," or "bondslave," was a slave who had been granted freedom by his master, but who loved his master so deeply that he voluntarily chose to continue on as that master's servant. Likewise, Paul was not a slave to Christ because he had to be; he was a slave to Christ because he *wanted* to be. He had totally surrendered himself to his Master.

The only way to be free from sin is to be "bound" to Jesus. Unless you completely surrender your life to the Lord, all of your efforts to lead a pure life will be futile. That old sinful nature will continue to rear its ugly head and influence your thoughts and actions. But if you are a bondslave of Jesus, following the leading of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5), you will not serve God out of fear and duty but out of love and gratitude. Your service will not be motivated by a desire to earn God's approval but will be motivated by a desire to be close to Jesus, recognizing that you already have that approval because of what Jesus did for you. This "blessed" bondage gives you the will, the power, and the motivation to live a life that is pleasing to God.

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A31.

death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁶And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. ¹⁷For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. ¹⁹Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

²⁰God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace

became more abundant. ²¹So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER 6

Sin's Power Is Broken

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? ²Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? ³Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

⁵Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.

⁶We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷For

when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

¹²Do not let sin control the way you live;* do not give in to sinful desires. ¹³Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

¹⁵Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! ¹⁶Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. ¹⁷Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. ¹⁸Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

¹⁹Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

²⁰When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. ²¹And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. ²²But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER 7

No Longer Bound to the Law

Now, dear brothers and sisters*—you who are familiar with the law—don't you know that the law applies only while a person is living? ²For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies,

6:12 Or *Do not let sin reign in your body, which is subject to death.* 7:1 Greek *brothers*; also in 7:4. 7:5 Greek *When we were in the flesh.*



first steps

PRAYER IS NOT A SOLITARY EXPERIENCE

Read ROMANS 8:26-27

Have you ever wondered what to say to God? Perhaps you have a sick friend that you don't know how to pray for. Or maybe you are unsure of how to pray for your spiritual needs. This portion of Scripture will encourage you. From the moment you asked Jesus to be your personal Lord and Savior, you received a resident guest in your heart: the Holy Spirit.

One of the many things he does is to help you in prayer—especially at those times when you don't know what to pray. As you realize how intimately God is involved in your prayers, you will begin to feel a unique closeness to your Father in heaven. You may even discover a freshness in your prayer life that you never had before.

The next time you don't know what to pray for, ask the Holy Spirit to help you voice your concerns and needs to God.

For the next note on "Pray," turn to p. 1127.

the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. ³So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

⁴So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God. ⁵When we were controlled by our old nature,* sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death. ⁶But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.

God's Law Reveals Our Sin

⁷Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not

said, “You must not covet.”* ⁸But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power. ⁹At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, ¹⁰and I died. So I discovered that the law’s commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead. ¹¹Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. ¹²But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.

¹³But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God’s good commands for its own evil purposes.

Struggling with Sin

¹⁴So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. ¹⁵I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate. ¹⁶But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

¹⁸And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.* I want to do what is right, but I can’t. ¹⁹I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. ²⁰But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²²I love God’s law with all my heart. ²³But there is another power* within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ²⁴Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? ²⁵Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

CHAPTER 8

Life in the Spirit

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ²And because you belong to him, the power* of the life-giving

Spirit has freed you* from the power of sin that leads to death. ³The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature.* ⁴So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁵He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

⁵Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. ⁷For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. ⁸That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

⁹But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) ¹⁰And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life* because you have been made right with God. ¹¹The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

¹²Therefore, dear brothers and sisters,* you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature,* you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children* of God.

¹⁵So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children.* Now we call him, “Abba, Father.”* ¹⁶For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. ¹⁷And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

The Future Glory

¹⁸Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. ¹⁹For all

7:7 Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21. 7:18 Greek *my flesh*; also in 7:25.

8:2b. 8:2b Some manuscripts read *me*. 8:3 Greek *our flesh*; similarly in 8:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12.

8:10 Or *your spirit is alive*.

8:12 Greek *brothers*; also in 8:29. 8:13 Greek *deeds of the body*.

8:14 Greek *sons*; also in 8:19. 8:15a Greek *you received a spirit of sonship*. 8:15b *Abba* is an Aramaic term for “father.”

7:23 Greek *law*; also in 7:23b. 8:2a Greek *the law*; also in

8:10 Or *your spirit is alive*.

8:14 Greek *sons*; also in 8:19. 8:15a Greek *you received*

creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope,²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children,* including the new bodies he has promised us.²⁴ We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope* for it.²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

²⁶And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers* in harmony with God's own will.²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together* for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.²⁹ For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn* among many brothers and sisters.³⁰ And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

³¹What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³²Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? ³³Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. ³⁴Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

³⁵Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we

8:23 Greek *wait anxiously for sonship*. 8:24 Some manuscripts read *wait*. 8:27 Greek for God's holy people. 8:28 Some manuscripts read *And we know that everything works together*. 8:29 *Or would be supreme*.



first steps

UNCONDITIONALLY
SURRENDER
YOUR LIFE

Read ROMANS 12:1-2

This passage of Scripture is what we call a conditional promise. The last part of verse 2 contains the promise. Yet if we want to discover God's perfect will for our lives, we must meet the three conditions mentioned at the beginning of these verses.

1. We Must Present Ourselves to God as Living Sacrifices. We need to recognize that we, as Christians, belong to God. The Bible tells us that we no longer own our bodies because Christ paid for them when he died on the cross (see 1 Corinthians 6:19b-20, p. 1032). Because our bodies belong to him, we must refrain from sinning. This is what is meant by living sacrifice—putting aside our own will and replacing it with God's.

2. We Must Not Be Conformed to This World. The next step to prepare our hearts to know the will of God is to keep from copying "the behavior and customs of this world" (12:2). When the Bible speaks of the world, it is not referring to the earth. Rather it is speaking of the mentality and thinking of the times—the spiritually bankrupt mind-set that is hostile toward the things of God and primarily focuses on mankind's own selfish desires.

3. We Must Be Transformed by the Renewing of Our Minds. One of the best ways to become "a new person" (12:2) is to literally saturate your mind and heart with those things that spiritually build you up. You can do this by studying God's Word, singing hymns and praises, spending time in prayer, and fellowshiping with other believers. As the apostle Paul tells us, "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8).

As we take these preliminary steps, we will be able to more accurately discern the will of God for our lives.

For the next note on "Seek God's Will," turn to p. 677.

have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ³⁶(As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") ³⁷No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

³⁸And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,* neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER 9

God's Selection of Israel

With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it. ²My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief ³for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters.* I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them. ⁴They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children.* God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. ⁵Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.*

⁶Well then, has God failed to fulfill his

8:36 Ps 44:22. 8:38 Greek *nor rulers*. 9:3 Greek *my brothers*. 9:4 Greek *chosen for sonship*. 9:5 Or *May God, the one who rules over everything, be praised forever. Amen*. 9:7 Gen 21:12. 9:9 Gen 18:10, 14. 9:10 Greek *she conceived children through this one man*. 9:12 Gen 25:23. 9:13 Mal 1:2-3. 9:15 Exod 33:19. 9:17 Exod 9:16 (Greek version).

promise to Israel? No, for not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God's people! ⁷Being descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted,"* though Abraham had other children, too. ⁸This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham's children. ⁹For God had promised, "I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."*

¹⁰This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins.* ¹¹But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; ¹²he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, "Your older son will serve your younger son."* ¹³In the words of the Scriptures, "I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau."*

¹⁴Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! ¹⁵For God said to Moses,

"I will show mercy to anyone
I choose,
and I will show compassion
to anyone I choose."*

¹⁶So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.

¹⁷For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth."* ¹⁸So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some,



off and running

KEEP YOUR SPIRITUAL ZEAL ALIVE

Read ROMANS 12:11

This verse not only encourages us to keep our zeal for God alive, it commands us to do so. Another meaning of the phrase "serve the Lord enthusiastically"

is to have a burning heart for God. The importance of this is seen in the book of Revelation. There Jesus warned the church in Laodicea that they were in danger of being "spit . . . out of [his] mouth" because they were lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-16). In essence, they had lost the fire of their spiritual zeal and were an offense to Christ. Therefore, Jesus told them to repent or he would reject them.

So what can be done to keep our spiritual zeal alive? We can keep fueling our

and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen.

¹⁹Well then, you might say, “Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven’t they simply done what he makes them do?”

²⁰No, don’t say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn’t he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? ²²In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. ²³He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory. ²⁴And we are among those whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

²⁵Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea,

“Those who were not my people,
I will now call my people.
And I will love those
whom I did not love before.”*

²⁶And,

“Then, at the place where they were told,
‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called
‘children of the living God.’”*

²⁷And concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet cried out,

“Though the people of Israel are as
numerous as the sand of the seashore,
only a remnant will be saved.

9:25 Hos 2:23. 9:26 Greek *sons of the living God*. Hos 1:10. 9:27-28 Isa 10:22-23 (Greek version). 9:29 Isa 1:9. 9:32 Greek *by works*. 9:33a Greek *in Zion*. 9:33b Isa 8:14; 28:16 (Greek version). 10:1 Greek *Brothers*.

²⁸For the LORD will carry out his sentence upon the earth quickly and with finality.”*

²⁹And Isaiah said the same thing in another place:

“If the LORD of Heaven’s Armies had not spared a few of our children, we would have been wiped out like Sodom, destroyed like Gomorrah.”*

Israel’s Unbelief

³⁰What does all this mean? Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God’s standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. ³¹But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. ³²Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law* instead of by trusting in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path. ³³God warned them of this in the Scriptures when he said,

“I am placing a stone in Jerusalem* that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. But anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.”*

CHAPTER 10

Dear brothers and sisters,* the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. ²I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. ³For they don’t understand God’s way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God’s way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law.

spiritual fire by spending time with God’s people in fellowship and prayer. We can also feed the fire with constant input from God’s Word. As two discouraged disciples realized, listening to the words of Jesus can rekindle a person’s zeal for God: “They said to each other, ‘Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?’” (Luke 24:32).

What is your spiritual temperature? Are you passionate about the Lord you serve? Do you make the most of every opportunity to tell others about Jesus? The English evangelist John Wesley once said, “Give me a hundred men who love God with all of their hearts and fear nothing but sin, and I will move the world.” If you are aglow with the Spirit, serving the Lord with zeal and enthusiasm, your life *will* make a difference.

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A48.

cornerstones

OUR PEACE CONTINUES AS WE FOLLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT*Read ROMANS 8:5-8*

Even if you are a Christian, you still must struggle with your sinful nature. However, if you allow God's Holy Spirit to control your life, that

struggle will be much less intense. For, as this passage says, you will want to live to please God.

If you follow your old evil desires, you "can never please God" (Romans 8:8). Your life—whether you realize it or not—will be empty. But if you live the Spirit-controlled life, you will experience "life and peace" (Romans 8:6). To enter into the Spirit-controlled life, follow the advice of the apostle Paul, "Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:2-3).

For the next note on "Peace," turn to p. 530.

⁴For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given.* As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

Salvation Is for Everyone

⁵For Moses writes that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands.* ⁶But faith's way of getting right with God says, "Don't say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?' (to bring Christ down to earth). ⁷And don't say, 'Who will go down to the place of the dead?' (to bring Christ back to life again)." ⁸In fact, it says,

"The message is very close at hand;
it is on your lips and in your heart."^{*}

And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: ⁹If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. ¹¹As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."^{*} ¹²Jew and Gentile* are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."^{*}

¹⁴But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"^{*}

¹⁶But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "LORD, who

has believed our message?"^{*} ¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. ¹⁸But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have:

"The message has gone throughout the earth,
and the words to all the world."^{*}

¹⁹But I ask, did the people of Israel really understand? Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God said,

"I will rouse your jealousy through people
who are not even a nation.
I will provoke your anger through the
foolish Gentiles."^{*}

²⁰And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying,

"I was found by people who were not
looking for me.
I showed myself to those who were not
asking for me."^{*}

²¹But regarding Israel, God said,

"All day long I opened my arms to them,
but they were disobedient and
rebellious."^{*}

CHAPTER 11

God's Mercy on Israel

I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

²No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning. Do you realize what the Scriptures say about this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the people of Israel and said, ³"LORD, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars.

10:4 Or *For Christ is the end of the law.* 10:5 See Lev 18:5. 10:6-8 Deut 30:12-14. 10:11 Isa 28:16 (Greek version).
10:12 Greek and Greek. 10:13 Joel 2:32. 10:15 Isa 52:7. 10:16 Isa 53:1. 10:18 Ps 19:4. 10:19 Deut 32:21.
10:20 Isa 65:1 (Greek version). 10:21 Isa 65:2 (Greek version).



BIG QUESTIONS

How Should I View Authority?

Read ROMANS 13:1-2

When dealing with the subject of authority—particularly how one should act toward those in the government—the Bible gives us some important things to consider.

God Raises Up Rulers. It is true that not every government official has been obedient to God. In fact, far too many have directly violated his Word. Yet God has allowed certain people to rule for his purposes. In the Old Testament God often allowed certain “evil” countries to come to power in order to punish Israel for their wrongdoing and to remind them of their need to return to God. Therefore, we need to respect those in authority, since God has divinely appointed them.

God Uses Those in Government Who Fear Him. While God is ultimately in control of every event that takes place in the world, he still uses his people in strategic positions of power. When Queen Esther, a Jew, faced the prospect of seeing her people put to death,

her Uncle Mordecai challenged her with these words: “If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14). Certainly, God does not forbid us to be part of the political process. Sometimes he will even use Christians in government to accomplish his purposes.

We Are to Be a Witness to Those in Authority. Your obedience to the laws of the land serves as a witness to the God you serve. Peter, addressing the early Christians who were suffering persecution under the cruel tyranny of Nero, still challenged believers to be law-abiding citizens (see 1 Peter 2:13-15, p. 1133).

Our Allegiance to God Should Always Come First. What about those times when a law or government does something that directly contradicts

God’s law? We are accountable to a higher authority. In the Old Testament we read how Daniel defied the king’s decree that forbade people to pray to anyone but the king (see Daniel 6:1-28, pp. 763-765). Daniel knew that God had said to worship him alone, so he obeyed God’s law instead of man’s. As you may recall, he was sent to the lions’ den, but God spared his life by shutting the lions’ mouths. In the New Testament, Peter told the high priest, when he had been warned not to talk about Jesus, “We must obey God rather than any human authority” (Acts 5:29). In more recent times, Christians in Communist and Muslim countries continue to share Christ and distribute Bibles, despite laws that make such actions illegal.

Perhaps the best approach to those in authority over us is to follow the advice found in 1 Peter 2:17: “Fear God, and respect the king.” Here we see a perfect balance, for as we fear God in our daily lives, we will live above reproach and be examples to those in authority. At the same time, we will be able to discern when human laws contradict the divine laws established by God.

For the next “Big Question” note, turn to p. 1029.

I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”*

⁴And do you remember God’s reply? He said, “No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!”*

⁵It is the same today, for a few of the people

of Israel* have remained faithful because of God’s grace—his undeserved kindness in choosing them. ⁶And since it is through God’s kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God’s grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved.

⁷ So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have—the ones God has chosen—but the hearts of the rest were hardened. ⁸ As the Scriptures say,

“God has put them into a deep sleep.
To this day he has shut their eyes so they do
not see,
and closed their ears so they do not hear.”*

⁹ Likewise, David said,

“Let their bountiful table become a snare,
a trap that makes them think all is well.
Let their blessings cause them to stumble,
and let them get what they deserve.

¹⁰ Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see,
and let their backs be bent forever.”*

¹¹ Did God’s people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves. ¹² Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God’s offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it.

¹³ I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this, ¹⁴ for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them. ¹⁵ For since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead! ¹⁶ And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their descendants will also be holy—just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.

¹⁷ But some of these branches from Abraham’s tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God’s special olive tree. ¹⁸ But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root.

¹⁹ “Well,” you may say, “those branches were broken off to make room for me.” ²⁰ Yes, but

remember—those branches were broken off because they didn’t believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don’t think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. ²¹ For if God did not spare the original branches, he won’t* spare you either.

²² Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. ²³ And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree. ²⁴ You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong.

God’s Mercy Is for Everyone

²⁵ I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters,* so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say,

“The one who rescues will come from
Jerusalem,*
and he will turn Israel* away from
ungodliness.

²⁷ And this is my covenant with them,
that I will take away their sins.”*

²⁸ Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁹ For God’s gifts and his call can never be withdrawn. ³⁰ Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead. ³¹ Now they are the rebels, and God’s mercy has come to you so that they, too, will share* in God’s mercy. ³² For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone.

³³ Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

³⁴ For who can know the LORD’s thoughts?
Who knows enough to give him advice?*

³⁵ And who has given him so much
that he needs to pay it back?*

11:8 Isa 29:10; Deut 29:4. 11:9-10 Ps 69:22-23 (Greek version). 11:21 Some manuscripts read *perhaps he won’t*.
11:25 Greek *brothers*. 11:26a Greek *from Zion*. 11:26b Greek *Jacob*. 11:26-27 Isa 59:20-21; 27:9 (Greek version).
11:31 Other manuscripts read *will now share*; still others read *will someday share*. 11:34 Isa 40:13 (Greek version).
11:35 See Job 41:11.

³⁶For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

CHAPTER 12

A Living Sacrifice to God

And so, dear brothers and sisters,* I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.* ²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

³Because of the privilege and authority* God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.* ⁴Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

⁶In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

⁹Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰Love each other with genuine affection,* and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.* ¹²Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

12:1a Greek *brothers*. **12:1b** Or *This is your spiritual worship*; or *This is your reasonable service*. **12:3a** Or *Because of the grace*; compare 1:5. **12:3b** Or *by the faith God has given you*; or *by the standard of our God-given faith*. **12:10** Greek *with brotherly love*. **12:11** Or *but serve the Lord with a zealous spirit*; or *but let the Spirit excite you as you serve the Lord*.



first steps

PUT ON GOD'S ARMOR

Read ROMANS 13:11-14

Another way the last verse of this text has been translated is "Be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling." In other words, we need to "clothe ourselves" with Christ. To do this, you need to let him be a part of everything that you do. Let him go with you everywhere you go. Let him act through you in every decision you make. Remember these three simple truths as you strive to obey Christ:

1. Time Is Short. Jesus Christ will return soon, and we need to be the best possible witness for him that we can be.

2. Live in the Light. As Ephesians 5:8 says, "For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!" The more you live in God's light, the less you will want to be influenced by the darkness of the world around you.

3. Rely upon Christ for Your Strength. You will never be able to stand against the temptations of life on your own. As you follow Christ and his example, you will find it much easier to avoid spiritual pitfalls. As it has been said, "The best defense is a good offense."

Some people want to put God in a little compartment. They will worship God from nine to eleven on Sunday morning, but the rest of the week is theirs. That is not the Christian life. As true followers of Jesus Christ, we need to be identified with our Master twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for the rest of our lives.

For the next note on "Obey God," turn to p. 1081.

¹⁷Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

¹⁹Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge;
I will pay them back,”*
says the LORD.

²⁰Instead,

“If your enemies are hungry, feed them.
If they are thirsty, give them something
to drink.
In doing this, you will heap
burning coals of shame on
their heads.”*

²¹Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

CHAPTER 13

Respect for Authority

Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. ²So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. ³For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. ⁴The authorities are God’s servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God’s servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. ⁵So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.

⁶Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They

12:19 Deut 32:35. 12:20 Prov 25:21-22. 13:9a Exod 20:13-15, 17. 13:9b Lev 19:18.

are serving God in what they do. ⁷Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.

Love Fulfills God’s Requirements

⁸Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law. ⁹For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.”* These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”* ¹⁰Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.

¹¹This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. ¹³Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don’t participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don’t let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

CHAPTER 14

The Danger of Criticism

Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don’t argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. ²For instance, one person believes it’s all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. ³Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don’t. And those who don’t eat certain foods



off and running

COULD THIS ACTIVITY CAUSE OTHER CHRISTIANS TO STUMBLE IN THEIR FAITH?

Read ROMANS 14:3-21

Don’t do anything that will bring criticism against yourself, even if you know that a certain activity is all right. What we do and become has a direct effect on others—not only

must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. ⁴Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval.

⁵In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable. ⁶Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God. ⁷For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. ⁸If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.

¹⁰So why do you condemn another believer*? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For the Scriptures say,

“As surely as I live,” says the LORD,
“every knee will bend to me,
and every tongue will confess and give
praise to God.”*

¹²Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. ¹³So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.

¹⁴I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong. ¹⁵And if another believer is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it. Don't let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ

died. ¹⁶Then you will not be criticized for doing something you believe is good. ¹⁷For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. ¹⁹So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

²⁰Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. ²¹It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble. ²²You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right. ²³But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

CHAPTER 15

Living to Please Others

We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. ²We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. ³For even Christ didn't live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, “The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me.”* ⁴Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.

⁵May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. ⁶Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

14:10 Greek *your brother*; also in 14:10b, 13, 15, 21. **14:11** Or *confess allegiance to God*. Isa 49:18; 45:23 (Greek version). **15:3** Greek *who insult you have fallen on me*. Ps 69:9.

for our life here on this earth, but also for eternity. We not only need to live our lives conscious of God's opinion, but we also need to live our lives with consideration for others. We do not want to do anything that has the potential of causing another Christian brother or sister to stumble or fall. Be sensitive to those around you. Don't let your Christian witness be hindered by what you say or do.

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A50.

⁷Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. ⁸Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews* to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. ⁹He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the palmist meant when he wrote:

“For this, I will praise you among the Gentiles;
I will sing praises to your name.”*

¹⁰And in another place it is written,

“Rejoice with his people,
you Gentiles.”*

¹¹And yet again,

“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles.
Praise him, all you people of the earth.”*

¹²And in another place Isaiah said,

“The heir to David’s throne* will come,
and he will rule over the Gentiles.
They will place their hope on him.”*

¹³I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul’s Reason for Writing

¹⁴I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters,* that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them. ¹⁵Even so, I have been bold enough to write about some of these points, knowing that all you need is this reminder. For by God’s grace, ¹⁶I am a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News so that I might pre-

sent you as an acceptable offering to God, made holy by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷So I have reason to be enthusiastic about all Christ Jesus has done through me in my service to God. ¹⁸Yet I dare not boast about anything except what Christ has done through me, bringing the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I worked among them. ¹⁹They were convinced by the power of miraculous signs and wonders and by the power of God’s Spirit.* In this way, I have fully presented the Good News of Christ from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum.*

²⁰My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a church has already been started by someone else. ²¹I have been following the plan spoken of in the Scriptures, where it says,

“Those who have never been told about him will see,
and those who have never heard of him will understand.”*

²²In fact, my visit to you has been delayed so long because I have been preaching in these places.

Paul’s Travel Plans

²³But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. ²⁴I am planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can provide for my journey.

²⁵But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers* there. ²⁶For you see, the believers in Macedonia and Achaia* have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem. ²⁷They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the

15:8 Greek *servant of circumcision*. 15:9 Ps 18:49. 15:10 Deut 32:43. 15:11 Ps 117:1. 15:12a Greek *The root of Jesse*. David was the son of Jesse. 15:12b Isa 11:10 (Greek version). 15:14 Greek *brothers*; also in 15:30. 15:19a Other manuscripts read *the Spirit*; still others read *the Holy Spirit*. 15:19b *Illyricum* was a region northeast of Italy. 15:21 Isa 52:15 (Greek version). 15:25 Greek *God’s holy people*; also in 15:26, 31. 15:26 *Macedonia* and *Achaia* were the northern and southern regions of Greece.



off and running

DO I HAVE AN UNEASY CONSCIENCE ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY?

Read ROMANS 14:23

When it comes to participating in questionable activities, it is easy to rationalize joining in because others are doing it. Yet this verse places

the responsibility of your choice squarely on your shoulders. You may protest and say, “Well, so-and-so is doing it!” But you are not that person. You must be obedient to what God tells you to do.

spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially. ²⁸As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. ²⁹And I am sure that when I come, Christ will richly bless our time together.

³⁰Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to join in my struggle by praying to God for me. Do this because of your love for me, given to you by the Holy Spirit. ³¹Pray that I will be rescued from those in Judea who refuse to obey God. Pray also that the believers there will be willing to accept the donation* I am taking to Jerusalem. ³²Then, by the will of God, I will be able to come to you with a joyful heart, and we will be an encouragement to each other.

³³And now may God, who gives us his peace, be with you all. Amen.*

CHAPTER 16

Paul Greet His Friends

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. ²Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me.

³Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. ⁴In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. ⁵Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person from the province of Asia to become a follower of Christ. ⁶Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit. ⁷Greet Andronicus and Junia,* my fellow

Jews,* who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did. ⁸Greet Ampliatius, my dear friend in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

¹⁰Greet Apelles, a good man whom Christ approves. And give my greetings to the believers from the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.* Greet the Lord's people from the household of Narcissus. ¹²Give my greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, the Lord's workers, and to dear Persis, who has worked so hard for the Lord. ¹³Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me.

¹⁴Give my greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters* who meet with them. ¹⁵Give my greetings to Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas and all the believers* who meet with them. ¹⁶Greet each other in Christian love.* All the churches of Christ send you their greetings.

Paul's Final Instructions

¹⁷And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. ¹⁸Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people. ¹⁹But everyone knows that you are obedient to the Lord. This makes me very happy. I want you to be wise in doing right and to stay innocent of any wrong. ²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus* be with you.

²¹Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you his

15:31 Greek *the ministry*; other manuscripts read *the gift*. 15:33 Some manuscripts do not include *Amen*. One very early manuscript places 16:25-27 here. 16:7a *Junia* is a feminine name. Some late manuscripts accent the word so it reads *Junias*, a masculine name; still others read *Julia* (feminine). 16:7b Or *compatriots*; also in 16:21. 16:11 Or *compatriot*. 16:14 Greek *brothers*; also in 16:17. 16:15 Greek *all of God's holy people*. 16:16 Greek *with a sacred kiss*. 16:20 Some manuscripts read *Lord Jesus Christ*.

How do you know when you should not participate in a certain activity? God's Holy Spirit will often give you an uneasy conscience about something you should not be doing. For example, you may have a sense that you are in the wrong place, with the wrong people, about to do the wrong thing. Or, you may have a lack of peace in your heart about an activity in which you are participating. When this happens, it is up to you to pay attention to your conscience and follow through by being obedient to God.

For the next note on "Responsibility," turn to p. 1020.



cornerstones

KNOWING WHOM YOU BELONG TO AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS BRINGS TRUE JOY

Read ROMANS 15:13

This verse touches upon three important facets of the Christian life that should give you great joy:

1. You Have a New Identity. When you accept Jesus Christ into

your life, God gives you a new identity. You discover that you are not merely some product of random chance. You are not a speck in the universe. You are a child of God. And as God's child you can rest assured that you will be loved and cared for by your heavenly Father.

2. You Have Power to Face Life. With that new identity and hope in Christ, you also have the promise of the Holy Spirit's presence and power in your life. The Holy Spirit works constantly in your heart, helping you to understand God's Word and to transform your attitudes and behavior (see "Who Is the Holy Spirit?" p. A28). An expanded translation of this verse says that by the power of the Holy Spirit, your whole life and outlook will be "radiant with hope." God has not left you to face life on your own. He has promised to guide and strengthen you with his Spirit.

3. You Have Hope for the Future. As a Christian, you have the hope and knowledge that there is life beyond the grave. Your last breath on earth will be followed by your first breath in heaven. We know this is true, because God has promised it in his Word (see "What Is Heaven?" p. A30). This verse asserts that your belief in Jesus and his promises to us as his followers will fill you with joy and peace.

The world offers many roads to happiness: sex, money, power, personal success. But they are all cheap and worthless substitutes in comparison to knowing that you are God's child and that you have the hope of heaven. This is the only road to lasting—indeed, eternal—joy.

To begin the next topic, turn to p. A35.

greetings, as do Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.

²²I, Tertius, the one writing this letter for Paul, send my greetings, too, as one of the Lord's followers.

²³Gaius says hello to you. He is my host and also serves as host to the whole church. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends you his greetings, and so does our brother Quartus.*

²⁵Now all glory to God, who is able to make

you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. ²⁶But now as the prophets* foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him. ²⁷All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.

16:23 Some manuscripts add verse 24, *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* Still others add this sentence after verse 27. **16:26** Greek *the prophetic writings*.