

COME INTO HIS PRESENCE

TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD

BY STEVE DEMME

Come Into His Presence

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INTRODUCTION

You may wonder how coming into God's presence is connected with building a family of faith. Great question! This book is the most recent part of my journey as a husband seeking to love his wife well and as a father endeavoring to love and encourage his four sons. When I first began to speak to parents, my exhortation to them was to be intentional about teaching their children God's Word and building a strong family culture. My two favorite messages were "Family Worship" and "The Family that Stays Together Stays Together."

After speaking on these topics for many years, I wrote ***Family Worship*** to teach and encourage parents how to have a regular time of worship and Bible reading in their homes. ***Hymns for Family Worship*** was compiled as a resource for those parents who wanted to sing tried and true hymns with their children.

Then in 2012, as I was going through a personal crisis as a husband and father (the basis for Crisis to Christ), I discovered a significant principle: Steve cannot give what Steve has not received. "We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19) I didn't realize that I was handicapped in loving God and loving my family, because I was hindered in my ability to assimilate God's unfailing love to me. I was not convinced in my heart of hearts that God loved and liked me. However, the Spirit of God came to my rescue and helped me grow and appreciate God's affection and care for me as never before.

The more I grew in my comprehension of His love for me, the more I loved Him and the better equipped I was to love my wife

and sons. Truly, "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17) We love God because He took the initiative to love us. We serve each other because He first served us. We are inspired to lay our lives down for others because He first laid His life down for us.

I then wrote ***Knowing God's Love***, which chronicles this journey and has many of the biblical studies I compiled to transform my thinking to line up with Scripture. As I was studying and meditating on John 15:9, my studies revealed another important command: "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." That passage came alive to me, and I embraced the truth that as much as the Father loved His Son, in the same way the Son loved me. I am still moved by this verity. This truth has played a huge role in my accepting and embracing the unchanging grace of God.

The last four words in John 15:9 are also meaningful: "Abide in My love." I wondered what I had to do to abide or remain in His love? I discovered the answer in the next three verses. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:10–12)

Jesus says, "Keep My commandments." Then He specifies His commandment: love others as He has loved us. I discovered this is called the New Commandment. "A new

commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (John 13:34) I have become convinced that loving others as Jesus has loved me is different than loving others as I want to be loved. It is similar, but with a different focus. Instead of thinking about how I want to be loved by others, I am focusing on how I have been loved by Jesus. **Loved to Love** is my attempt to understand and apply this divinely inspired way of loving. As a husband, I saw that the command to “love your wives, as Christ loved the church” (Ephesians 5:25) is simply Paul—in the Spirit—applying the New Commandment to marriage.

Families of faith begin with each member of the family loving God, knowing God, and having a vital connection with the living God. When we are assimilating God’s care and affection for us, we are being equipped to love well.

As a father, I have given much thought to how our Heavenly Dad loved His Son. I have four sons and desire to know what a great dad looks like. Jesus said, “As the Father has loved Me.” (John 15:9) I asked myself, “How did His Dad love Him?” I began searching the Word of God for insights into their relationship and felt like it culminated at the baptism of Jesus. This significant event took place before Jesus commenced His earthly ministry. After Jesus emerged from the water and the Spirit came upon Him, His Dad said, “This is My dearly loved Son, Who brings Me great joy.” (Matthew 3:17 NLT) At this juncture, Jesus had not done anything. These loving words inspired and enabled Jesus to fulfill the greatest task anyone had ever undertaken. Jesus did not work *for* His Father’s love and affection; He operated *from* the certainty of His Father’s love and affection. This anointed benediction

equipped Jesus to steadfastly pursue His mission with the full assurance of His Father’s unfailing love and care. Jesus was a loved Son, which enabled Him to be a loving Savior.

Like Jesus, for me to love well, I have to be loved well. My relationship with God impacts my relationships with others. The more I comprehend God’s love, the more I love God. Paul knew this when he recorded this prayer for the church in Ephesus. This church was the one who had lost their first love. (Revelation 2:4) When I was seeking God to help me love Him more and know His love for me in a deeper way, I often prayed this prayer.

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him Who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:14–21)

There are two commandments by which I now operate. One: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37) Two: Love my family as Jesus has loved me. For me to love God with everything in me, and love my wife and sons as God has loved me, I have to be a loved son. It is an

eternal verity that we cannot give what we have not received. “We love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) The degree to which I assimilate God’s love is the same measure to which I extend God’s unfailing love and affection to my wife and sons. The best thing I can do for God and my family is “to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) and be “rooted and grounded in love.” (Ephesians 3:17)

Paul advised us to “let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” (Romans 12:2 NLT) I am a new person because of intentional study of grace and the love of God. I am convinced in my heart and mind that God not only loves me, but He also likes me and delights in me. This book is about the next step in my journey to know and love God and how the Spirit has led me to come into His presence and “taste and see that the LORD is good!” (Psalm 34:8) Reading and studying about God’s unfailing love and affection has been transformational. Tasting and experiencing His presence has been revolutionary.

After two years of learning about God’s grace and His steadfast, unchanging love for His adopted children in His Word, I had a life-changing experience sitting on a granite rock overlooking the Delaware Water Gap in the Pocono Mountains.

I had believed in my head that God loved me for decades, but in the previous few years of studying God’s grace and lovingkindness in Jesus, I was finally convinced of this truth in my heart of hearts. That August afternoon, I sensed God calling me to take our relationship to a deeper level. I rode my bike to this sacred spot and waited on God for the first time.

As I came close to Him, He came close to me. We communed together for about an

hour. It was a sweet and deeply meaningful time. I was there again the next day, and subsequent days. When Sandi would ask me where I was going, I would reply, “To spend time with my Dad.”

These times were so precious, I wanted to maintain this new connection with God. I found that sitting in my home was not as effective as setting aside time to seek God and come close to Him while walking. These walks quickly became one of the most meaningful times of each day. I began this practice in 2014 and maintained this new discipline until the fall of 2018, when the Spirit of God introduced me to a new regimen.

During those four years, I began each “walk with God” by confessing sins and counting on God’s promise of forgiveness: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) Then, I would recite a Scripture that strengthened my faith that God will indeed meet with me if I seek Him, such as, “Come close to God, and God will come close to you.” (James 4:8 NLT)

I especially liked to recite Ephesians 2:13, which encompasses cleansing from sin and coming close to God: “In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

I was approaching God as if He were in the Holy of Holies. I began outside the temple, where I confessed my sin and acknowledged my guilt. Next, I offered a sacrifice – except in this case, a much better sacrifice than the blood of goats and lambs, for now my sacrifice is Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God. As the author of Hebrews states:

“Dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because

of the blood of Jesus. By His death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest Who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting Him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:19-22 NLT)

Jesus is indeed the new and living way to the Father. Since He shed His blood for us on the cross, we can boldly approach the living God. As He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

As believers in the sacrificial work of Jesus, we can confidently enter into God's presence with joyful singing, thankful lips, and hearts overflowing with praise for His name. Amen

CHAPTER 1

Overview to Seeking and Finding

MORNING WALK

On September 17, 2018, the Spirit of God led me in a new way to come near to God based on Psalm 100. Three phrases were illuminated by the Spirit; come into His presence with singing, give thanks to Him, and bless His name.

PSALM 100

Make a joyful noise to the LORD,
all the earth!
Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into His presence with singing!
Know that the LORD, He is God!
It is He who made us, and we are His;
We are His people,
and the sheep of His pasture.
Enter His gates with thanksgiving,
and His courts with praise!
Give thanks to Him; bless His name!
For the LORD is good;
His steadfast love endures forever,
and His faithfulness to all generations.

COME INTO HIS PRESENCE WITH SINGING

The third line of Psalm 100 is, “Come into His presence with singing!” I sought to obey immediately and (silently) sang “Rejoice, the Lord is King” as I walked on the sidewalk, because I know all four verses and it is a favorite hymn of mine. Praising God through music was exhilarating. I felt like I was already joining the angels as I began with worship instead of humble

confession and trying to work my way into God’s presence. My spirit was encouraged.

This new approach to God based on the new and living way which the blood of Jesus has opened embodies a spirit of celebration. I am coming into His presence with joy and serving the LORD with gladness. Since Jesus has died and been resurrected, I have access into the Holy of Holies, and I am enabled to draw near to the Son of God singing His praises and thanking Him for what He has done.

Coming close to God this way is consistent with the spirit of Isaiah 12 where we are encouraged to draw waters from the wells of salvation with joy!

“You will say in that day: ‘I will give thanks to You, O LORD, for though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away, that You might comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.’ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: ‘Give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the peoples, proclaim that His name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for He has done gloriously.’” (Isaiah 12:1–5)

ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING

The next phrase which was quickened to me was, “Enter His gates with thanksgiving,” and later in the psalm, “Give thanks unto

Him.” After I was done singing the hymn, I began to give thanks. I had to work at this a little, for it was a departure from my normal routine of confession, cleansing, seeking, etc. However, once I got with the new program, it was a wonderful time. I spent several minutes giving thanks. The more I exercised my thankfulness muscles, the more things I thought of for which to be thankful. I was enjoying this new approach.

I gave thanks for the sunshine, my family, and practical items. Then, I began to be thankful for what God has done for me. I thanked Him for loving and liking me, for cleansing me from sin, and for clothing me in the righteousness of Jesus. Once I developed some momentum, my perspective on the day had already improved. I felt spiritually rich!

BLESS HIS NAME

The third portion of Psalm 100 that was illuminated was, “Bless His name!” or as some translations render it, “Praise His name!” I took this to mean I was to praise God for Who He is. After singing and giving thanks for what He had done for me, I now had the opportunity and privilege to honor and bless Him for His attributes and His person.

My experience with blessing God’s name was similar to what happened when I gave thanks. As I thought about the nature of God, my heart and mind took a little time to adjust to this new regimen. However, as I pondered what I knew about Him, I remembered that God is good. He is patient. He is kind. This focus on His character and nature was challenging at first, but it produced excellent fruit. I reveled in the knowledge and awareness of God’s patience, goodness, and kindness. Since that first day of seeking God through this

portal of Psalm 100, I have tried to focus on one aspect of God’s nature and reflect on it each day.

CLOSE TO GOD

The New Living Translation renders James 4:8, “Come close to God, and God will come close to you.” Each time that I come close to God through singing, giving thanks, and meditating on His name and nature, God comes close to me. It is difficult to describe what communing with God feels like, but I am learning to sense when I am in His presence.

LISTEN

Seven times in the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, we find this expression: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” After I have progressed through the first three stages of prayer, I then ask God to give me ears to hear what He is saying. I have learned that God appreciates being asked. “I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” (Luke 11:9–10)

God is alive! He desires to communicate with His children. Sometimes I sense specific words; other times Scriptures come to mind. Interestingly, He will sometimes use phrases from books or movies to speak to my spirit. When this first occurred, I was surprised—then blessed. Since God knows the best method to communicate with each of His children, as He knows each of us intimately.

“O LORD, You have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at

home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. You go before me and follow me. You place Your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!" (Psalm 139:1–6, NLT)

ORDERING YOUR WAY RIGHTLY

One day, as I continued to practice this new prayer discipline, I sensed the Spirit say, "Orders his way rightly." When I returned home, I looked up this phrase and found it in Psalm 50:23: "The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies Me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!" I appreciated His confirmation of this new method that has proven so effective in seeking God. This Spirit-directed technique works.

"Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know Him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring." (Hosea 6:3 NLT)

LIFESTYLE

I continue to enjoy special times with God as I seek Him. God faithfully meets me as I come close to Him in this manner. I am now in year two of this discipline. As I walk out my driveway, I find myself already singing. After a few hymns, I begin giving thanks, and soon I am meditating on my Heavenly Father's names and attributes. This new regimen has become a lifestyle. Often, by the time I return home, I have a hymn playing in my mind, I am continuing to offer thanksgiving to God, and I am still being edified by new insights into His character and person. When I walk in the door, I am at peace and fairly glowing having been in God's presence. I find that I am gentler and kinder in my spirit. Having

been loved on by my Dad, my love tank is full and ready to care for my family.

Walking and seeking God have proven effective for me in my journey. If this is not possible for you, ask God for an alternative. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages His followers to seek God in private. May He show you the time and the place to go away by yourself and seek God.

"When you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, Who sees everything, will reward you." (Matthew 6:6 NLT)

OVERVIEW

Along this journey, I have continued to give more thought to these essential components: singing, thanksgiving, blessing, and listening. Each action step is expanded upon in greater detail in their own chapter of this book. I have also added several studies as guides for coming into God's presence. Each study begins with a hymn, followed by a list of things for which we can be thankful, then an attribute or name of God to contemplate, along with prayers for God to help us hear what He is communicating.

As I have embraced this new discipline of walking, singing, giving thanks, and blessing God's name I am aware that any of these three components by themselves is edifying. Just being outside and walking while singing a hymn is refreshing. Taking time to pause during the day and lift up my head and give thanks always puts life in the proper perspective. Praising God and reflecting on His nature is a blessed privilege. When I have this sacred opportunity to sing, give thanks, and praise God I am transformed and enriched. My spirit affirms that this is what I was designed to do.

The more I know God, the more I love Him. The more I love Him, the greater my desire to know Him. St. Augustine expressed this so eloquently when he wrote, “To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek Him the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement.”

CHAPTER 2

My Journey

This chapter provides a brief history of how God has patiently and steadily drawn me to Himself. Beginning with meeting Jesus in Colorado, to my life-changing crisis in 2012, to my first baby steps in waiting and communing with God, God has kindly and lovingly deepened our relationship.

THE GOOD NEWS

I heard the gospel at a Young Life ranch in Colorado the summer before I entered high school. I had been invited to go with a friend from my local church. His aunt and uncle wanted him to hear the gospel, so they paid for him to go and offered to pay for a friend to come along as well. That friend was me.

On the large diesel bus, which was transporting us from Pittsburgh to Colorado, I began meeting the other campers. We were all from Western Pennsylvania but went to different high schools. As we introduced ourselves and got to know each other, the one constant for most of the students was their involvement in their local Young Life chapter. This was my introduction to students who were following Jesus.

I had always attended church, but there was something different about these young people. I noticed that they didn't ask me if I was a Christian or if I was a believer. If they had, I would have said, "Yes." I believed in God and knew a good bit about Jesus from Sunday School. Instead, the students asked, "Have you met Jesus?" That was a very different question. I couldn't say that I had.

During this extraordinary trip, I heard the Good News for the first time. I learned that I could know Jesus personally, have my sins forgiven, and go to heaven. I simply needed to ask and receive these gifts from Jesus. On the side of a mountain in Colorado—outside a Swiss chalet—I asked Jesus to forgive my sins and come into my heart, and He did.

Over the next three years of high school, I did not grow much in my relationship with God. I only sporadically attended Young Life meetings and weekend retreats. However, I had tasted the presence of God in the Rocky Mountains and never forgot this encounter.

COLLEGE

After graduation, I chose to attend Grove City College in Pennsylvania. During the first couple of years in college, I was off and on in my dedication and commitment to following Jesus. Then, after my junior year—in preparation for working at a camp for troubled youth in the Poconos—I read *The Cross and the Switchblade* by David Wilkerson. Part of the way through my reading, I put the book down and prayed, "Okay, God. Here we go." He knew what I meant. I was committed to following Him fully without any wavering. I returned for my senior year as a zealous follower of Jesus.

When I had left for summer vacation, Dan was the one committed Christian in my fraternity. However, I soon discovered God had been at work that summer. Upon returning to campus that fall, I found that Joey had recommitted his life to following

Jesus, and two other earnest believers, Andy and Rick, had just joined our fraternity. Now we were five.

Grove City had recently hired a believing president, Dr. Charles S. MacKenzie, a gifted chaplain, Dr. Bruce Thielemann, and several committed Christ-following professors, among whom were Dr. Ross Foster, Dr. Andrew Hofferker, and Dr. Ralph Carlson. Dr. R. C. Sproul was also teaching in Western PA, and I spent part of Christmas vacation at Ligonier Valley Study Center learning and studying about how to grow as a Christian. That year, I grew in my faith by leaps and bounds along with my brothers in Christ. By continually witnessing to our unsaved friends, attending Bible studies, listening to anointed chapel services, taking classes with Christian professors, and leading a weekend retreat, the five of us were able to grow closer to God and each other.

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

As a senior in college, I was making plans for what I would do when I graduated. Since I had decided to serve God, Matthew 6:33- "Seek first the kingdom"- described my passion and purpose. Whenever I had a decision to make, I would ask myself if this direction was consistent with seeking God's kingdom first. I considered staying at Grove City College and ministering with an organization called Coalition for Christian Outreach (now CCO), but I felt the need for more training. I applied and was accepted at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The next fall, I headed to New England, where I began working towards my Master of Divinity degree.

After my first year of training for Christian ministry, I served as a counselor at Summer's Best Two Weeks (now SBTW), a Christian summer camp. While I was at camp, I was

asked to preach at two small Methodist churches in Western Pennsylvania. These were the first two sermons I ever preached in an official church capacity. My mom, dad, and several friends from college came to witness and encourage my efforts. Interestingly, my text was Philippians 3:8: "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." I believe I chose this Scripture to preach from, since I had been influenced by two outstanding books: ***Knowing God*** by Dr. J.I. Packer and ***The Pursuit of God*** by A.W. Tozer. My desire to know God was present even then.

DAILY BIBLE READING

During my second year in seminary, I began attending a church near campus that placed a high emphasis on the daily reading of Scripture. I observed that most of the congregation read their Bibles through from Genesis to Revelation annually. I found a small yellow Bible Reading Chart in the vestibule of the church, and on September 20th, began the habit of reading a portion of God's Word every day with the aim of completing the whole Bible each calendar year. God has helped me follow through on this discipline for several decades. It is one of the best habits I've ever developed as a Christian.

During the few years I attended this fellowship, Rev. Frank Murray, his son David, and Donald Markham were an inspiration to me to follow Jesus fully. These men loved God, loved His Word, and were led by the Spirit. They inspired me in my quest to know God.

GOD DOES NOT EXEMPT US FROM SUFFERING

On December 4, 1976, I was awakened in the middle of the night by my landlord informing me that my father was on the phone. My dad told me he had just identified the body of my younger brother in a local hospital. He had died in an automobile accident earlier that night. I was numb with grief. A few hours later, Elisabeth Elliott was driving me to Logan Airport, where I would fly to Pittsburgh to be with my family for the funeral.

God had providentially given me the opportunity to board at the home of Elisabeth Elliot during my second year of seminary. On that dark early morning, she was seeking to provide comfort and said one sentence which transformed my understanding of God and what it means to follow Jesus: “God does not exempt us from suffering, but transforms us in it.” This precious lady had lost her first husband to a spear in the jungles of Ecuador, and her second husband died of cancer. She knew whereof she spoke. I listened and had her repeat it several times until I had committed it to memory. Until then, I had mistakenly believed that the Good News did keep me from suffering. I had thought I would have peace, joy, and a blessed life without difficulties. I now began to understand that God did not eliminate valleys; instead, He promised to be with us in them.

I was asked to preach at my brother’s memorial service. As the time for the service drew near, I found I had very little emotional energy. Since I had arrived home, I had been involved in making funeral arrangements and calling relatives to tell them of my brother’s passing. I was spent. A classmate and fellow summer camp counselor showed up just before the service and asked if we

could find a quiet spot to pray. We knelt, and God wonderfully met us. I sensed His nearness and – surprisingly—a deep sense of joy. I was still grieving, but I also was also joyful.

I then walked to the front of the sanctuary with the other ministers to speak to the friends and family who were gathered to support us in our loss. God moved in the service, and many people, including my parents, came to Christ that evening. His power was perfected in my weakness. He was, and is, “a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)

ANOTHER VALLEY

A few years later, I graduated from seminary and the next day married Sandi Beth. We were asked to serve at a small church in Georgia and spent our first nine years as a family living in the church parsonage. During these years, Isaac, Ethan, and Joseph were born. We were busily pouring our energy into the lives of church people, youth ministry, and the local community. Then we were blessed with our fourth son, John, who was born with Down Syndrome. Our lives changed. During the first ten months of his life, he had five significant sojourns at the hospital (one was for open-heart surgery, and another was intestinal surgery).

When I say we were “busily pouring our energy,” perhaps it would be more accurate to say I was over-extended with ministry. I did not believe in saying no, for I was still following my life purpose of seeking first the kingdom. I was teaching at the local high school, serving with a nonprofit organization, running summer camps for teens, etc. After John was born, we were emotionally and physically stretched with his care. I tried to cut back on my responsibilities, but it

was too little, too late. Before John's first birthday, we had moved to a different state in hope of being restored, for my wife and I had burned out.

God led us to Massachusetts, where I was hired to teach at a Christian school. I enjoyed many aspects of our new life here, including teaching, the local church, and our new friends. On the surface, I was functioning okay, but emotionally, I was in survival mode. Even though the vibrant church we were a part of was experiencing a season of reviving, I was unable to refill my own spiritual reservoir. I faithfully attended church twice a week, and while present in the service found that my spiritual battery was recharged. I came home full of faith from being with the other believers. However, when I awoke the next morning, I was very needy, and God seemed far away.

I liken my condition at that time to being an old car with a battery that had gone dead. When someone came along and connected the jumper cables, my car started and continued to run. I could drive home in hope that the car would have charged enough to start the next morning. But alas, when I turned the key, there was only a sickening, clicking sound signaling that the battery had not held the charge and was dead.

My practice of reading the Bible from Genesis to Revelation was put on hold for two years. I continued the practice of reading Scripture daily but spent most of my time in the Psalms. I did not know how to find support for my own burned-out condition. At the time, I had no idea how to describe the state of my soul. I was trying to hold my life together the best I knew how. In retrospect, I was afraid to tell people – and God – how I was really doing. I feared that if I let down my guard and asked

for help, I would fall apart like a spiritual Humpty Dumpty.

One day, the Spirit directed my attention to Psalm 55:22: "Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved." I sensed God asking me to let Him carry my burden, while also promising me that when I did, He would sustain me and keep me from falling apart. I tearfully knelt by my bed and poured out my heart to God. He met me. My spiritual battery was truly recharged, and I began to heal. Once again, God met me in a dark valley and proved Himself to be a very present help in my trouble and distress.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

TWO OR THREE

I have been, and still am, blessed with wonderful Christian brothers and sisters. I have rich friendships with the people of God. When I think back to seasons when God has been particularly near, those times were usually during Bible studies, prayer meetings, or church conventions, when I was worshiping with the brethren. This is certainly biblical and special, "For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them." (Matthew 18:20) I can rarely recall a time when I did not sense that God was present as I was meeting with other kindred spirits. Even in our regular times of worship as a family, the Spirit of God met us and taught us again and again.

When God's people are gathered in His name, He is among us. Thanks be to God. I love being with God and His people.

However, at that stage of my life, I did not have a vibrant personal relationship with God myself. I found it difficult to “be still and know” (Psalm 46:10) that He was God. Waiting on God and quietly reflecting was a foreign exercise for me. In 2012, this began to change.

LOVING GOD

At a conference in Alaska, I was speaking to parents on Deuteronomy 6:7: “You shall teach [these words] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” At the close of the session, a wise mother asked me: “Why do you always leave out the two previous verses?” I didn’t know and looked them up. “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” (Deuteronomy 6:5–6)

Immediately, a light bulb went off in my mind, and I observed the order and wisdom in God’s plan for parents. Before we can teach our children to love God and His Word, we need to love God and His Word. I began asking God to help me love Him with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. As I was asking God to work in my heart, I also thought of the Ephesian church in Revelation 2:4: “You have abandoned the love you had at first.” This admonition was directed to the church, the followers of Jesus. I knew I loved God when I first met Him on the side of a mountain in Colorado. And I knew I loved Him when I recommitted my life to seeking first His kingdom. But did I love Him now? Did I love God with everything in me? I did not want to lose my first love but to have it rekindled.

God answered that prayer, as I knew He would. But how He answered it was a surprise. I thought He would change my heart and I would awaken with new divine affection for God and the things of God. Instead, through sermons, hymns, Scripture, and my “special” son with Down Syndrome, God began making me know how much He loved me. I remonstrated with God and said that while I appreciated this shower of blessing, I was wanting to love Him more, not learn about how much He loved me.

As soon as I uttered that prayer, 1 John 4:19 came to mind: “We love because He first loved us.” Of course! The more we comprehend His love for us, the more we will love Him in return. I have little trouble believing God loves others, but I find it difficult to fathom that He loves me. I needed to have my mind transformed and began devoting many hours searching the Scriptures. I studied to increase my understanding of God’s steadfast love, His grace, and His unfailing affection towards His adopted children. I wrote *Knowing God’s Love*, which is a result of my study.

This was not only a blessed year as I reveled in my new understanding of God’s unfailing love; it was also the hardest year of my life. Without going into detail here (see *Crisis to Christ*), I hit rock bottom. I reached out to brothers and sisters in Christ and asked for help. They magnificently responded with prayer support while also offering to come and spend time with me. Two days later, Jesus met me in my kitchen and made me know that He not only loved me, but He knew me, He created me, and He liked me for who I was. This was a life-changing revelation.

Up until then, I had mistakenly believed God liked me more if I did stuff for Him, such as seeking first His kingdom. Now I

was beginning to grasp the true meaning of grace. God's gift of grace is His steadfast, unfailing love and affection. I have always had trouble with grace. Even though I knew theologically what grace was by definition, I didn't grasp it in my heart of hearts. I had issues and scars from my past that I had to work through. Thank God that He has walked through these painful recollections with me, and now I am comprehending His love and affection like never before. Whereas I used to seek first the kingdom to be loved, now I am seeking first the kingdom because I am loved.

WAITING ON GOD

One of the books that God used during that difficult season of life was ***Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*** by Peter Scazzero. In addition to reading it three times myself, I also studied it with five couples over an eight-week period. The first part of each daily assignment was to be still for two minutes. During the entire eight weeks, I did all of the written work, but I was never able to be "still" for two minutes. I could not figure out why I was unable to sit quietly and seek God for even a short time.

Then, after two years of my ongoing studies on God's love and grace, I met with God on a granite overlook in the Pocono Mountains called Lookout Point. That special day, I rode my bike a few miles, walked to the point, and sat down. God met me there as I sought Him. I was still and silent, and God drew near. We communed – for this is the best word I know to describe the experience – for almost an hour. Sometimes I talked (silently); other times I listened, but we were together, a Father with His son. I am near to tears even as I write this. That experience was incredibly precious.

Sometime later, I was sharing with a friend about this special connection, and he wondered why it took me so long to be still in His presence. I think it was because I did not want to seek or spend time with someone Who I did not believe genuinely liked me. In my heart of hearts, the reason I struggled with grace and being still is because I believed that God only appreciated me if I performed well. I have since seen a therapist, engaged in the work of reflection, and asked God to search my heart. I now believe that this incorrect thinking originated in relationships with significant individuals in my past. Suffice to say, I was ill-equipped to commune with God until I was convinced of God's unfailing, steadfast, gracious love for me. When I knew He delighted in my presence and cared for me based on who I was and not what I had done, I began to enjoy spending time with Him.

SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Since my years in seminary, I have read my Bible through over forty times. I have compiled studies assuring me that God is on my team and has my back. I have not only read of His divine affection, but I have also received dreams and illuminations confirming these truths to my heart. Now, after waiting on God and meeting Him at Lookout Point, I was tasting and experiencing His presence. I was moving from a distant, arms-length awareness of God to an up-close and personal connection. My relationship with God was blossoming.

One morning, during my regular devotion time, I sensed the Holy Spirit communicate, "You're solid on the truth. Let's work on the spirit." I knew exactly what He meant. After years of reading and studying Scripture, God was taking our personal connection

up another notch. In John 4:23, Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman at the well. He said, “True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.”

Since God knows how to communicate with each one of His children, He was making me recognize that He wanted me to deepen my relationship with Him. This new phase of my journey, which is emphasizing the “spirit” and encouraging my relationship with God, does not diminish the “truths” I have known and embraced for decades; it builds upon them. The spirit and the truth go together. I cling to all I have learned about my how sin separates me from God and how the death of Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, takes away my sin and restores me to God. I know that it is only because of Jesus that I am cleansed and forgiven, washed and clothed, adopted and well-pleasing. It is the blood of Jesus which has brought me near to God and emboldens me to come before the throne of God.

WALKS WITH GOD

The way in which God led me to develop “the spirit” was by taking regular walks. Sometimes the Spirit and I jokingly refer to these times as my “walks with God,” or “walking in the Spirit.” Getting outside, with no computer to distract me, nor a leather recliner to make me sleepy, or a well-meaning spouse or child to talk with me, has proven effective and beneficial. On these excursions, God has my undivided attention. It is just the two of us. These special times have become very meaningful, and they are one of the highlights of each day.

One of my sons is an avid hiker. He also walks very quickly. I sometimes have to jog to keep up with him. I tend to walk slowly, especially when I am coming close to my

Dad. One night, as I was making my way through our neighborhood, I was passed twice by other couples.

My hiker son shared this tidbit with me, which describes my pace and my purpose:

“On a Sierra Club Outing, author Albert Palmer told of a conversation he had with John Muir on the trail. He asked Muir, ‘Someone told me you did not approve of the word “hike.” Is that so?’ His blue eyes flashed, and with his Scottish accent he replied: ‘I don’t like either the word or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains – not hike! Do you know the origin of that word ‘saunter?’ It’s a beautiful word. Away back in the Middle Ages, people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages through which they passed asked where they were going, they would reply, ‘A la sainte terre,’ ‘To the Holy Land.’ And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers. Now these mountains are our Holy Land, and we ought to saunter through them reverently, not ‘hike’ through them.”

I consider myself a seeking “saunterer.” I have continued to make regular, almost daily, saunters to connect with my God. After two years of approaching Him beginning with confession of sin, then believing for cleansing in the blood, and finally drawing near and seeking Him, God has led me in a new way to approach Him. I am coming into His presence with singing, giving thanks unto Him, and blessing His name. After meeting God in this way hundreds of times, I have put pen to paper to share with you what I am learning on my journey of coming close to God based on Psalm 100.

CHAPTER 3

Taste and See that the Lord is Good

God delights in His children and invites us to come close to Him. For much of my life as a follower of Jesus, I was content to experience God's nearness at arm's length. I was more comfortable with a group of other Christians in meetings and worship services than I was seeking Him on my own. I did pray, but my earnest requests were for God to help me in preaching and teaching or some other kingdom activity, where I depended on His blessing. However, I was not at ease being still before God and waiting on Him one-on-one.

The more I became convinced that God not only loved me for who I was, but even liked me as well, the more willing I was to come close to Him personally. As I further studied the unfailing love of God, and as my mind was subsequently renewed and my thinking transformed, I became more attracted to having a deeper personal connection with Him. After much study, I became convinced that God enjoyed being with me. "The godly people in the land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them!" (Psalm 16:3 NLT)

I have now discovered that I enjoy being in His presence as well. My regular walks with God used to be accompanied by a measure of anxiety as I wondered if God would come close to me as I sought Him. I questioned if He really liked being with me. After several years of tasting God's goodness and drawing near to Him, I can unequivocally affirm that God smiles upon

and welcomes His children with open arms every time we seek and come close to Him.

THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

One of my battles is believing that God loves me for who I am and not based on what I do. This desire to perform well and be accepted by God and other people is a big part of who I am. As a result of my bent to work for people's affection, I had difficulty comprehending that God's unfailing, steadfast love has been freely offered to each of us. Grace is not something to earn; it is a gift. Paul eloquently speaks to my condition and what I knew in my mind, but struggled to believe in my heart.

"In the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works." (Ephesians 2:7-9)

I seem to have no difficulty believing that God loves others, just not me. I incorrectly reason that if God really knew me, He wouldn't care for me. I am so grateful for Psalm 139. I cling to the truths revealed therein: that God created me and has known me since He formed me in my mother's womb. He is aware of what I am thinking and knows what I am going to say before I do.

"You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my

ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.” (Psalm 139:2–4)

Knowing me thoroughly, He still loves me completely. His thoughts toward me are precious and without number.

“How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with You.” (Psalm 139:17–18)

“This I know, that God is for me.” (Psalm 56:9)

AS A SINNER

He also loves me when I am a mess. If you struggle with comprehending God’s gracious love and affection like I do, meditate on these life-giving and love-conveying Scriptures:

“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:5–8)

IN THE MORNING

I frequently struggled to comprehend God’s care and affection when I awoke each morning. I am not sure why, but it was a battle I had to fight every day. Thankfully, God illuminated these Scriptures, and they made all the difference.

“Satisfy us in the morning with Your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” (Psalm 90:14)

“Let me hear in the morning of Your steadfast love, for in You I trust. Make me

know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.” (Psalm 143:8)

For several years, I would quote one or both of them upon awaking. Thank God for His inspired truth, which is practical and powerful.

WORDS OF TRUTH

Here are more passages that God used to transform my thinking. The Spirit of God, speaking through Paul, urges us to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” (Romans 12:2) I have been doing this for several years, and I am grateful for this process, which is increasingly changing my thoughts to match His.

“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.” (Psalm 42:8 NLT)

“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.’” (Exodus 34:6)

“The LORD set His heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.” (Deuteronomy 10:15)

“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!” (1 Chronicles 16:34)

“The LORD takes pleasure in His people; He adorns the humble with salvation.” (Psalm 149:4)

“This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in Him.’” (Lamentations 3:21–24)

“The LORD your God is in your midst, a Mighty One Who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by His love; He will exult over you with loud singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17)

[Jesus said], “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.” (John 15:9)

“The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God.” (John 16:27)

“I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38–39 NASB)

“God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.” (Ephesians 2:4–5)

“This is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

“We love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

SEEK MY FACE

I like the phrase “seek My face.” Being in God’s presence and seeking His face are very appealing to me. When I am near God, we are aware of each other. We have eye contact, if you will. As I am giving Him my undivided attention, I sense His attention in return.

The expressions “come into someone’s presence” and “seek my face” have a similar meaning in the Old Testament, according to Easton’s Bible Dictionary. “Face simply means presence, as when it is recorded that Adam and Eve hid themselves from

the ‘face [Revised Version, ‘presence’] of the Lord God’ (where the same Hebrew word is rendered ‘presence.’)”

We can see how these two expressions are both used in translating Psalm 24:6 in two different versions of the Bible.

“Such people may seek You and worship in Your presence, O God of Jacob.” (Psalm 24:6 NLT)

“Such is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.” (Psalm 24:6 ESV)

Notice how Psalm 27:8 is rendered in the ESV and NLT translations.

“You have said, ‘Seek My face.’ My heart says to You, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’” (Psalm 27:8 ESV)

“My heart has heard You say, ‘Come and talk with Me.’ And my heart responds, ‘LORD, I am coming.’” (Psalm 27:8 NLT)

I appreciate the way different words are used to express the same sentiment. As God invites us to seek His face or be in His presence and commune with Him, our hearts joyfully respond, “LORD, I am coming!”

DAVID’S HEART

David was a man after God’s heart. His passion for God resonates throughout the Psalms. His greatest desire was to be in the presence of God and gaze at His face.

“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple. For He will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble; He will conceal me under the cover of His tent; He will lift me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD. Hear, O LORD,

when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to You, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’” (Psalm 27:4–8)

David used his influence and authority as the King of Israel to set apart men whose callings and occupations were to give thanks to God through song. This ordinance became a part of the temple worship. If I had lived in that period of history, I would have counted myself fortunate to be one of Asaph’s brothers.

“On that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the LORD by Asaph and his brothers. Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; tell of all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His presence continually!” (1 Chronicles 16:7–11)

THE FATHER IS SEEKING

I believe that God is calling people to be present-day Davids and Asaphs. May we joyfully be a part of those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth. I have been inspired by this passage in John, which reveals that God’s heart is still seeking true worshipers.

“The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23–24)

May God so work in all of our hearts that we develop a passion to know God and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Amen.

“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When

shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42:1–2)

BRYCE CANYON

I learned a wonderful lesson at Bryce Canyon on a family vacation. This particular national park is filled with extraordinary rock formations called “hoodoos.” As we waded along the rim looking down at these unique sculptures, we noticed people hiking down among them.

My oldest sons decided to take the trail and walk down the steep incline. I was undecided because I knew that if I hiked down, I would have to hike back up and the trail looked challenging. Then I thought this may be my only opportunity so I took the plunge and followed these young teenage antelopes into the canyon. I was so glad I did.

Seeing the landscape from a distance was impressive but walking among the hoodoos and evergreen trees and then looking up at the clear blue sky was an amazing experience. I was not seeing the park from afar, but tasting and seeing the park from within. I tried to explain this later that it was like looking at a juicy hamburger and taking a bite of the delicious burger.

I have read the Psalms many times and heard David talk about His love for God. I have read biographies of outstanding Christians who have walked with God and been led by Him. By applying the principles of Psalm 100 I have not only read about God, I have tasted and seen God. I have heard God as I communed with Him. May I encourage the reader to not gaze at God from afar, but come into His presence and connect with the living God.

CHAPTER 4

Come into His Presence with Singing

When the Spirit directed me to “come into His presence with singing,” I recognized this phrase as a part of Psalm 100. I searched my mind for a hymn to sing and chose “Rejoice, the Lord is King” by Charles Wesley. I silently sang all four verses as I made my way up the street on my regular walk. I selected this hymn because it is centered on God.

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks,
and sing and triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Jesus the Savior, reigns,
the God of truth and love;
When He had purged our stains
He took His seat above:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

His kingdom cannot fail:
He rules o’er earth and heav’n;
The keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus giv’n:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Rejoice in glorious hope!
Our Lord the Judge shall come
And take His servants up
to their eternal home:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

SINGING PRAISE TO GOD

The first day God led me to seek Him based on these three principles of singing, giving thanks, and praising His name, it felt a little strange to begin by singing. It was like eating dessert before the main course of meat and vegetables. I like to sing, but I had been in the habit of first confessing sins, then asking for cleansing in the blood of Jesus. This was followed by drawing near to God and quoting Scripture promises, reinforcing the truth that as I draw near to God through the blood of Jesus, He would draw near to me. This way that I had sought God in the past takes more time and can be tedious.

In this new approach to seeking God, the first step is to sing God’s praise. Singing praises at the outset of my prayer time made me feel as if I was jumping in and skipping the “work.” Now that I have had a few years to think about this new approach, I appreciate the beauty and order in God’s Word. Approaching God in the old way of confession, sacrifice, cleansing, etc. was legitimate, but much of my attention was focusing on me and my needs. Now, when I adopt God’s approach as laid out in Psalm 100, I am transported instantly to the throne of grace in heaven.

When I am in His courts, singing seems to me to be the appropriate and fitting posture, for God is the undisputed King of kings and Lord of lords. He reigns in heaven above and on the earth beneath. His kingdom is

over all. Not only is He omnipotent and all-powerful, but He is also good. He is forever kind. He is righteous. God is loving. God is just. He is slow to anger and patient. He has provided all that we need. His Son's death on the cross broke the power of sin and death. He delivered us from the kingdom of darkness and ushered us into the kingdom of light. He has adopted all those who turn to Him in repentance and accept and embrace His Son in faith. For any and all of these marvelous works that I have mentioned, the only response which seems proper is approaching God with singing and praise.

When we sing, we are expressing faith in God and what He has accomplished at Calvary. We are testifying that God has done all things well. His work on the cross is finished. Truly, God alone is worthy of our worship, adulation, and adoration.

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

When my children were younger, I loved to hear them sing while they were playing or doing their schoolwork. Just hearing them hum made me know that everything was well in their little worlds. John, my son with Down Syndrome, will sometimes sing in his room as he is getting ready for the day. My wife and I look at each other and grin, for we love to know he is at peace.

I like to think it blesses God's heart to hear His children singing as they approach Him. We are communicating that even though we have concerns and cares, our Father is greater than our problems. With child-like trust, we are declaring that our Dad has everything under control.

When I am looking heavenward while singing God's praise, I like to think that it blesses Him and causes Him to smile. When so many are shaking their fist at God, or

complaining, or questioning, I want Him to know that I think He is perfect. I want to join the angels in praising God and cheering Him on. I am grateful to be on His team. As I sing, I am declaring that everything is okay and that I am confident He is not only my Creator and King, but He is also my Redeemer and Sustainer. He is working all things for my good, whether or not I am able to see or understand His will and His ways.

The psalmist expresses this sentiment succinctly: "Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting." (Psalm 147:1)

PRESENCE OF THE LORD

On one of my annual forays reading through the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi, I found this nugget in 2 Chronicles:

"All the priests who were present had purified themselves, whether or not they were on duty that day. And the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and all their sons and brothers—were dressed in fine linen robes and stood at the east side of the altar playing cymbals, lyres, and harps. They were joined by 120 priests who were playing trumpets.

The trumpeters and singers performed together in unison to praise and give thanks to [Jehovah]. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, they raised their voices and praised [Jehovah] with these words: 'He is good! His faithful love endures forever!' At that moment a thick cloud filled the Temple of [Jehovah]. The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of [Jehovah] filled the Temple of God." (2 Chronicles 5:11–14 NLT)

When these people worshipped in unison, God came down. His presence was

so powerful, they had to leave the temple. I have had tastes of this kind of anointed singing and praise when God was tangibly present. There is certainly a connection between praise and God's presence. The KJV renders Psalm 22:3, "Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." The NLT reads, "You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel."

ELISHA

Sometimes God speaks to us through music, as He did when speaking to Elisha, the servant of Elijah. This account takes place when Elisha was following the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom on their way to attack the king of Moab. After a long, dry journey, they were fearful and thirsty, so they sought a prophet to tell them what they ought to do.

"King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked, 'Is there no prophet of [Jehovah] with us? If there is, we can ask [Jehovah] what to do through him.' One of King Joram's officers replied, 'Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to be Elijah's personal assistant.' Jehoshaphat said, 'Yes, [Jehovah] speaks through him.' So the king of Israel, King Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the king of Edom went to consult with Elisha.

'Why are you coming to me?' Elisha asked the king of Israel. 'Go to the pagan prophets of your father and mother!' But King Joram of Israel said, 'No! For it was [Jehovah] who called us three kings here—only to be defeated by the king of Moab!'

Elisha replied, 'As surely as [Jehovah] Almighty lives, Whom I serve, I wouldn't even bother with you except for my respect for King Jehoshaphat of Judah. Now bring me someone who can play the harp.' While the harp was being played, the power of [Jehovah] came upon Elisha and he said,

'This is what [Jehovah] says.' This dry valley will be filled with pools of water!" (2 Kings 3:11–16 NLT)

THE WHOLE MAN

Singing a hymn is one of the few activities that encompasses our whole being. Our minds are edified as we sing with understanding and proclaim biblical truths about God. Our spirits are inspired when we are in unity with heaven and worshiping God. Our bodies are energized as we stand and sing with all our heart. Lifting up our heads and hands helps us fix our attention in a posture of worship. And something deep transpires in our being that is eternal and hard to describe. As we sing praises and worship God, we are connected to the eternal Godhead, which is perhaps that part of us which we classify as our soul.

On one my saunters into God's presence, I was contemplating the benefits of singing meaty and melodious hymns. As I sought God, He communicated that singing fully integrates the mind soul and spirit and thus prepares me to enter into His presence.

The evangelist D. L. Moody said, "Music and song have not only accompanied all Scripture revivals, but are essential in deepening spiritual life. Singing does at least as much as preaching to impress the word of God on people's minds. Ever since God has first called me, the importance of praise expressed in song has grown upon me." <http://www.biblebelievers.com/moody/09.html>

SINGING WITH UNDERSTANDING

As you sing the words, understand the truths you are proclaiming. Recall that Jesus said the Father looks for those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Paul echoes this sentiment: "I will sing with the spirit, and

I will sing with the understanding also.” (1 Corinthians 14:15 KJV)

The more I sing “Be Thou My Vision,” the more I grasp the depth and the meaning of the words. May I challenge you to take a hymn that has substance and read the verses slowly to glean the nuggets of truth found therein. Hymns that I have sought to memorize have continued to impress me with their spiritual depth.

One of the meatiest worship songs I know is “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” I could easily preach a sermon on each verse, as there is an abundance of truth enfolded in the inspired lyrics. I identified many of the Scripture passages which are referenced in verse 4 of this hymn. Each phrase is rich with Scripture imagery and content.

“Come, Desire of nations, come!”

“I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Haggai 2:7 KJV)

“Fix in us Thy humble home.”

“Jesus answered him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love Him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’” (John 14:23)

“Rise, the woman’s conquering seed, Bruise in us the serpent’s head.”

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15)

“Adam’s likeness now efface, stamp Thine image in its place, Second Adam from above.”

“The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.... The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second Man is from heaven.... Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also

bear the image of the Man of heaven.” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47, 49)

“Quickn’ing Spirit breathe Thy love.”

“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” (Job 33:4)

“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5)

PSALMS, HYMNS, SPIRITUAL SONGS

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)

Paul mentions three categories that cover a wide array of worship songs. We all have a preference for the type and style of music that inspires and assists us in worshiping God. I have mentioned mostly hymns in this book, as they help me the most. I am assuming you each have your favorite “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” as well.

If you are interested in praying and perhaps singing Psalms, here are nine that emphasize praise: Psalms 34, 95, 103, and 145–150. We know that Jesus’ prayer on the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me,” (Matthew 27:46) was inspired by Psalm 22. Perhaps some of these Psalms were sung by Jesus and the early church.

The night before Jesus was crucified, after the disciples had just shared the Last Supper with their Lord, they concluded their final time together by singing. “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” (Mark 14:26)

PRISON WORSHIP

Paul certainly practiced what he preached about singing Psalms and hymns. When he and Silas were cast into prison, they sang and worshiped for all to hear. “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened.” (Acts 16:25–26)

REVELATION

I am certain that we can expect to be part of the heavenly choir, participating in anointed worship and singing, when we gather around the throne of God. Several times in the book of Revelation, we are given glimpses of life in the heavenly places.

“They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are Your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed.’” (Revelation 15:3–4)

“Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to His name.” (Hebrews 13:15 NLT)

HYMN FAVORITES

There are as many different musical tastes and styles as there are saints. With that in mind, I am sharing which hymns are some of my favorites. The numbers are from Hymns for Family Worship, which you may access here: www.buildingfaithfamilies.org/familyworship/.

The Doxology, #13

To God Be the Glory, #39

O Worship the King, #4

Be Thou My Vision, #46

How Great Thou Art, #90

Blessed Assurance, #1

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, #76

All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name, #45

Come, Thou Almighty King, #6

A Mighty Fortress, #25

Crown Him with Many Crowns, #14

Jesus Paid It All, #63

Great Is Thy Faithfulness, #89

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, #22

Some of these hymns are on the list because I am familiar with the words. Others have been selected because they are meaningful to me. Some days, I find that I am not up to a long hymn and will sing the Doxology or a chorus, such as “Father, I Adore You”:

“Father, I adore You, lay my life before You,
how I love You.

Jesus, I adore You, lay my life before You,
how I love You.

Spirit, I adore You, lay my life before You,
how I love You.”

Regardless of what I am singing, my aim is to sing “unto the Lord” and make a joyful noise “unto Him.”

JOYFUL SHOUT AND GLADNESS

Since “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4) I continue to study this Psalm word by word in the original Hebrew. The first command is to make a joyful shout. The specific word that is used in Psalm 100:1 is *Ha-Riu*. It is a derivation or cognate of the root word *Rua*, which means to raise a shout or give a blast.

Ha-Riu is only used 12 times in the Bible and two of these instances are in

Joshua 6:10,"Joshua commanded the people, 'You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.'"

I have now added this to my daily discipline of seeking God according to these precepts of Psalm 100. I first give a shout like "Hallelujah" or "Praise the Lord" and often I echo the words of Moses which He declared when the ark set out, " "Arise, O [Jehovah], and let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."

And when I sing, I choose to sing happily, for God's word directs me to, "Make a joyful noise to [Jehovah], all the earth! Serve [Jehovah] with gladness!" (Psalm 100:1-2a)

CHAPTER 5

Enter His Gates with Thanksgiving

After I have sung one, two, or three songs of praise, I then move into thanksgiving mode. I thank my Creator for lush, green, manicured lawns, carefully pruned trees, fragrant blossoms, and joyful bird songs. I enjoy the cloud formations, a bright blue sky, the sunset, and a crisp breeze. I thank God for giving me a functioning mind and the ability to walk. I appreciate that I can hear, see, and smell. God's "invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made." (Romans 1:20)

After many days admiring the clouds, I did a study on clouds in Scripture and was amazed at how often God is associated with clouds. Clouds remind me of the nearness of my Father. "The LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.'" (Exodus 19:9) "A voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!'" (Luke 9:35)

The wind speaks to me of the Spirit of God, who appeared in a powerful way at Pentecost in a "mighty rushing wind." (Acts 2:2). The Holy Spirit is also spoken of as wind in John 3:8: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

The sun makes me think of the Son, who will be all the light we need in the New

Jerusalem, according to Revelation 21:23: "The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb."

Seeing God in His creation and thanking and honoring Him is the opposite of the sad plight of those who "although they knew God, did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:21)

GRATEFUL

I am also grateful for my wife, our four sons, their godly spouses, and our delightful grandchildren. I see them as gifts from God: "A prudent wife is from the LORD" (Proverbs 19:14), and, "Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from Him." (Psalm 127:3 NLT)

Some days, I express my gratitude to God for giving me a heart to love Him, a mind to know Him, energy to serve Him, a spirit to commune with Him, and a soul to live with Him eternally. I want to not only express my gratitude for His good gifts, but to also acknowledge the Giver of the gifts, for "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17)

Most of us have received teaching on being thankful. This is not new doctrine. I have found that being thankful every time I seek God builds on joyfully singing praises to Him. It keeps my attention focused on Him and helps me see life from His perspective.

As I do seek to intentionally give God credit for all He has done, I understand the first verse of “Count Your Blessings,” #23, by Johnson Oatman, Jr.:

“When upon life’s billows
you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged,
thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings
name them one by one,
And it will surprise you
what the Lord hath done.”

NAME THEM ONE BY ONE

For many years, our family enjoyed the practice of pausing at the end of each week to give thanks. My wife was generally the recorder and would write down what each of us offered. Everyone was encouraged to think of specific things and circumstances that we could be grateful for. Thankfulness is like a muscle – the more we exercise it, the stronger it becomes. When we first started, it was easy to give thanks for a bicycle found at a yard sale, or new books from the library, or opportunities to share the gospel. We encouraged each other to also mention hard things and not just what we enjoyed. Giving thanks in ALL things acknowledges that God is in control and we trust Him.

Often, we would bring out the calendar, and the notes on each day helped us to remember all that had transpired during the week. Our lives move so quickly, and taking a half an hour to stop and be grateful helped us to appreciate God. As the song says, “Count your many blessings name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”

We continued this habit for many years, and we now have a stack of spiral bound stenographer notebooks filled

with lists, each marked with a date and what each member of the family was thankful for. This practice has produced a week-by-week family history, recorded in that stack of notepads. Perhaps one of your family members would like to be the official chronicler, like “Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the royal historian.” (1 Chronicles 18:15 NLT)

GIVE THANKS BY FAITH

“Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 NLT) The only way I can consistently give thanks to God is by believing that He is God and that He is working all things together for my good. (Romans 8:28) Being grateful for everything is active trust. It is faith in action. When I consciously thank God for every circumstance, I am looking to God and telling my Dad that “He has done all things well” (Mark 7:37), or as the New Living Translation renders it, “Everything He does is wonderful.”

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” (Psalm 103:2)

After I have sought to be grateful for my immediate world, I often give thanks for what God has done for me and all of His adopted children. May God help me not to “forget all His benefits.” Psalm 103 is filled with specific things God has done for us: “Who forgives all your iniquity, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, Who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” (Psalm 103:3–5)

I have listed a dozen things I am thankful for to whet your appetite. I hope you think of fifty more. Once I begin to be

intentional and specific, I find more and more things that God has accomplished for me. I have a much longer list here: <http://www.buildingfaithfamilies.org/comeintohispresence/>.

Thank You for creating me in Your image.

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

Thank You for knowing me.

“O LORD, You have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar.” (Psalm 139:1–2)

Thank You for taking away my sin.

“Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

“As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12)

Thank You for praying for me.

“Christ Jesus is the one Who died – more than that, Who was raised – Who is at the right hand of God, Who indeed is interceding for us.” Romans 8:34)

Thank You for never leaving or forsaking me.

“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20 NLT)

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

Thank You for being with me in the valleys of life.

“When I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me.” (Psalm 23:4 NLT)

Thank You for living in me.

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Thank You for giving me hope.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Romans 15:13)

Thank You for seeking me.

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)

Thank You for giving me a wife.

“A prudent wife is from the LORD.” (Proverbs 19:14)

Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit.

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.” (John 14:16)

Thank You for working all things together for my good.

“To them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28 ASV)

REJOICE THAT YOUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN

My nature is geared to being thankful for what I have accomplished with God’s help. At the end of the day, I enjoy thinking back to what I have done for His kingdom, such as producing a podcast, writing a chapter of a book, or encouraging people. God has been gently reminding me that my worth is not based on what I do, and His unfailing love is not dependent upon my performance. He loves us for who we are.

As I was reading again through the gospels, I found a group of seventy-two disciples that received the same message from Jesus after returning from a successful ministry outreach.

“The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject

to us in Your name!’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.’” (Luke 10:17–20)

The message I received from this account was to not rejoice in what has been done in Jesus’ name, but to rejoice that our names are written in heaven. This has been an adjustment for me, since I am happiest when I can measure output and check off items from my to-do lists. Jesus is patiently teaching me what is ultimately important. It is a joy to be able to rejoice in eternal verities. I am cleansed, forgiven, clothed, adopted, and a member of God’s family. My name is written in heaven. I have eternal life in Jesus. I will live forever with Him!

NOW THAT I AM IN CHRIST...

I am loved.

“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.” (John 15:9)

I am born of God.

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.” (1 John 5:1)

I am an adopted child of God.

“You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by Whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” (Romans 8:15–16)

I am a new creation.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I am cleansed and forgiven.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

I am clothed with garments of salvation.

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.” (Isaiah 61:10)

I am not condemned.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

I have eternal life.

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.” (John 3:36)

I am loved well.

“[Nothing] shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:39)

Some days, I sing a song of thanksgiving to reinforce eternal verities, like “Be Thou My Vision.” This past week, I have been singing a simple chorus, “Thank You Lord for Saving My Soul”:

“Thank You Lord, for saving my soul.

Thank You Lord, for making me whole.

Thank You Lord for giving to me,
Thy great salvation so rich and free.”

I have three lists that I have compiled over the past few years which help me to thank God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. These are by no means exhaustive, but I hope they will inspire you on your journey of giving thanks. You can find them on the website, buildingfaithfamilies.org/comeintohispresence.

“Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NLT)

CHAPTER 6

Bless His Name

The third portion of Psalm 100 that was illuminated that morning was, “Bless His name!” I took this to mean I was to praise God for Who He is. I had begun my approach to God by singing, then giving thanks, and now I had the opportunity to honor Him by blessing, or praising, His name. We could spend eternity thanking and praising God for what He has done, and now we are being directed to praise Him for Who He is. We have the special privilege of acknowledging His matchless character and His excellent nature. Some translations say, “praise His name” in place of “bless His name.” The Amplified Version expands this phrase to read, “Bless and affectionately praise His name!” (Psalm 100:4 AMP)

In the kingdom of God, names are significant. They represent the nature of a person. For example, we see throughout Scripture that God is called “holy.” When Jesus was asked to teach His disciples how to pray, He taught them the prayer which begins, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.” (Matthew 6:9) Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we bless God’s name. We ascribe holiness to His name. “Thus says the One Who is high and lifted up, Who inhabits eternity, Whose name is Holy.” (Isaiah 57:15) The psalmist declares, “Let them praise Your great and awesome name! Holy is He!” (Psalm 99:3)

Throughout Scripture, God’s people have had their names changed to reflect a new calling or a changed character. Abram, which means “father,” received a new name

to reflect the influence he would have on the whole world. God called him Abraham, which means the “father of nations.” His grandson, Jacob, had his name changed after wrestling with the Angel of God all night. He became Israel. “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.” (Genesis 32:28)

Consider Hoshea, the servant of Moses, whose name means “salvation.” In Numbers 13:16, God changed his name to Joshua, which means “Yahweh saves” or “Jah saves.” Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land with Jah’s help. Mary and Joseph were directed to name their son Jesus. Jesus in the Greek, like Joshua in the Hebrew, also means “Yahweh saves” or “Yahweh is salvation.” “She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

GOD IS

The first time I sought to bless God’s name, I considered what part of God’s character I was going to meditate on. My first thought was how patient and kind He is to me. My experience was similar to what happened when I gave thanks. As I pondered God’s patience, kindness, and gentleness, my heart and mind reveled in this truth, and my thoughts turned from a trickle into a stream. God had lovingly drawn me to Himself over fifty years ago.

He has patiently and continually revealed more about Himself to me ever since.

I thought of how gentle God is. In Matthew 11:29, He is described as “gentle and lowly in heart.” As I have come close to God and been in His presence many times, He is always gentle and kind. He is near and approachable. I look forward to meeting with Him and spending time learning from Him.

THE MOST EFFORT

Of the three disciplines – singing, giving thanks, and blessing His name – praising, blessing, and honoring His name is the most challenging to me, but which has produced the most unexpected fruit. I know lots of songs and hymns. I have made lists of things for which I am grateful. However, I have rarely spent significant time focusing on one of God’s names or meditating on one of His character qualities. While excellent and fitting in themselves, the first two exercises of singing and thanksgiving prepare me to focus on God.

As I “bless His name,” I love what I learn about God. Meditating on His nature has revealed new and deep insights into God’s nature. My journal is full of these precious glimpses into God’s person. Here are a few qualities that are very meaningful to me:

God is Love. “We have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” (1 John 4:16)

God is Light. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)

God is Good. “Taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Psalm 34:8)

God is Near. “He is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In Him we live and move and have our being.’” (Acts 17:27–28)

God is Kind. “When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us.” (Titus 3:4–5 NASB)

God is Eternal. “The eternal God is your refuge, and His everlasting arms are under you.” (Deuteronomy 33:27 NLT)

God Never Changes. “I the LORD do not change.” (Malachi 3:6)

I AM

For a season, I read and meditated on the “I Am” titles for Jesus in the Gospel of John. I took one per walk and, after pondering it, found each name wonderfully enlightening. Each one of these verses describes a unique facet of His being:

“I am the Bread of Life.” (John 6:48)

“I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven.” (John 6:51)

“I am the Light of the world.” (John 8:12)

“I am the Door of the sheep.” (John 10:7)

“I am the Good Shepherd.” (John 10:11)

“I am the Son of God.” (John 10:36)

“I am the Resurrection and the Life.” (John 11:25)

“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6)

“I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser.” (John 15:1)

SELF CONTAINED PSALM

As I have begun digging deeper for this book, I have observed something in this simple and yet sublime Psalm. Notice the

four sections which I have set apart with underlined subtitles:

Singing and Praise

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!
Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into His presence with singing!

Who He is

Know that the LORD, He is God!
It is He who made us, and we are His;
We are His people, and the sheep of His
pasture.

Giving Thanks

Enter His gates with thanksgiving,
and His courts with praise!
Give thanks to Him; bless His name!

Who He is

For the LORD is good;
His steadfast love endures forever,
and His faithfulness to all generations.

Sandwiched between the commands to sing, give thanks, and praise God's name are two significant sections which describe God and reveal Who He is. In the third verse we read: "Know that the LORD, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." A few verses later, the Psalmist declares: "The LORD is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations."

There are over 40 studies which are to assist us as we sing, give thanks, and praise His name. If I am walking and do not have access to a study based on a particular attribute of God I find plenty of fodder within Psalm 100 itself.

I can begin with a joyful shout, gladness, and a song. Then I give thanks because Jehovah is God, that He made me, and I am His. Since I now want to bless or praise His name, I consider the last verse and say

"I bless you Jehovah for You are good, Your steadfast love endures forever, and Your faithfulness to all generations."

PSALM 145

Another favorite Psalm that reveals God's nature is Psalm 145, which begins with: "I will extol You, my God and King, and bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You and praise Your name forever and ever." (Psalm 145:1–2) Here are a few verses to illustrate some of the rich insights this Psalm provides into the nature of God.

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and His greatness is unsearchable."

"The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

"The LORD is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made."

"The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down."

"The LORD is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His works."

"The LORD is near to all who call on Him."

"My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever."

As I read this Psalm, I find myself pausing after each verse and thinking about the aspects of God it reveals. For example, verse 9 says that God is "good to all." Then, my mind remembers that He gives rain to the just and the unjust. (Matthew 5:45) He gives each of us breath. (Job 33:4) He created the sun and moon to give light in the day and the night. (Genesis 1:14–16) He designed marriage as a sacred institution. (Genesis 2:24) Jesus holds everything together: "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:17) Truly God is good to all, whether we are believers or unbelievers.

HELP ME PRAISE YOUR NAME

Many times, after singing and giving thanks, I have appealed to the Spirit to help me bless and praise His name. I have asked Him to teach me an attribute of God and help me meditate on it. During the week preceding Easter, the word which came to mind was “Sacrificer.” Jesus is the One who laid down His life as a sacrifice for us. Here are several thoughts and Scriptures that came to me as I meditated on His sacrifice:

“Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Ephesians 5:2)

“Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.” (1 Corinthians 5:7 NLT)

“He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Hebrews 9:26)

“When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.” (Hebrews 10:12)

“Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

REVEALER

On another saunter, God’s good Spirit led me to “Revealer,” for the Son reveals the Father, and the Father reveals the Son. “No one knows Who the Son is except the Father, or Who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” (Luke 10:22)

As I let this thought penetrate deeply into my mind and heart, I stopped and gave thanks to God. How amazing that the God of the universe has revealed His Son to me. How incredible that the Son has shown me the Father.

“Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and you

still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father.’” (John 14:8–9)

“Jesus declared, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.’” (Matthew 11:25)

“‘Who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven.’” (Matthew 16:15–17)

PRAY-ER

Not long ago, some members of my family were walking/running a virtual 5K at a local school’s racing track. Since we each needed to make several trips around the track, I chose to spend my time seeking God. On the first lap, I sang praises. The second lap was devoted to thanksgiving, and the third lap was focused on blessing His name. Once again, I asked for help, and the word “Pray-er” came to mind. I thought first of Jesus, sitting at the right hand of God, praying for you and me. (Romans 8:34) Then, I remembered how Jesus would often steal away from the crowds to pray to His Father. “After He had dismissed the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone.” (Matthew 14:23)

Since we had just celebrated Easter, I thought of His desperate prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane. “He fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” (Matthew 26:39)

I was moved at the words of Jesus on the cross, crying out to His Father. “At the

ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Mark 15:34)

When I am walking and do not have a Bible reference work available, I am grateful for all the years I have invested in reading God’s Word. Since I am familiar with the inspired Word of God, the Spirit is able to quicken passages such as these to my mind as He assists me in blessing His name.

BLESS AND PRAISE

In addition to meditating on God’s character, I can also simply pray and praise His name by saying, “Bless You, God, for being a Sacrificer.” And, “I praise You for being a Revealer and a faithful Pray-er.”

David exclaimed, “I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together!” (Psalm 34:1–3)

There are a host of wonderful Psalms that mention praising God’s name: “Those who know Your name put their trust in You, for You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.” (Psalm 9:10)

“For this I will praise You, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to Your name.” (Psalm 18:49)

“In God we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to Your name forever.” (Psalm 44:8)

“For this I will praise You, O LORD, among the nations, and sing praises to Your name.” (2 Samuel 22:50)

“There is none like you, O LORD; You are great, and Your name is great in might.” (Jeremiah 10:6)

As a result of compiling the studies for this book, I often find myself praising God

for several of His names. “Praise You, Lamb of God. Bless You, Prince of Peace. Praise God for being my Savior. I honor You, King of kings. Bless You, Good Shepherd. I praise You, Creator and Sustainer. Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow.” Amen. Praise is fitting. Praise is a privilege. Praising God is a joy.

“I will be filled with joy because of You. I will sing praises to Your name, O Most High.” (Psalm 9:2 NLT)

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens.” (Psalm 8:1)

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9–11)

KNOWING GOD

In the final chapter of his long and incredible life, Moses, who spent decades in the presence of God, wrote a hymn for the people of Israel to memorize. From the beginning, Moses magnifies God’s name and His nature:

“I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.” (Deuteronomy 32:3–4)

Hosea encourages us to pursue and expand our knowledge of God: “Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD. His going out is sure as the dawn; He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.” (Hosea 6:3) I have found that being rooted and grounded in Scripture is a great place to begin learning

about God. I am grateful that God has encouraged me to pursue Him and come into His presence. This exercise has taken my knowledge of God to a deeper level.

Jeremiah gives a similar exhortation to depend and expand our knowledge of God: “Thus says [Jehovah]: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am [Jehovah] Who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares [Jehovah].’” (Jeremiah 9:23–24)

Malachi speaks of a group of people who esteem God’s name. God takes note of them and writes their names in a book. “Those who feared [Jehovah] spoke with one another. [Jehovah] paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who feared [Jehovah] and esteemed His name.” (Malachi 3:16)

The more time and energy I invest in blessing God for Who He is, the more I know Him. This knowledge is grounded in Scripture and enhanced by “tasting and seeing” that the Lord is good. As Job aptly describes his encounter with the living God, “I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.” (Job 42:5)

Paul wanted to know God above everything else. In his letter to the Philippians, he declared, “Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” (Philippians 3:8 NLT). In the beginning of his letter to the Ephesian church, he prayed “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.” (Ephesians 1:17)

The more I know God, the more I love Him. The more I love Him, the greater my desire to know Him. Meditating on His name and praising Him for who He is adds to my understanding of God’s nature and person.

BLESSING AND CURSING

Speaking of the tongue, James observes, “With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.” (James 3:9–10)

The tongue has tremendous potential for good and ill. The third commandment given to Moses on Mount Sinai is, “You shall not take the name of [Jehovah] your God in vain, for [Jehovah] will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” (Exodus 20:7)

Praising God’s sacred name is the antithesis of taking His sacred name in vain. May we use our tongues for His glory and avoid treating His name “lightly or frivolously.” (Exodus 20:7 AMP)

AARONIC BENEDICTION

In Numbers 6:22–27 the priests receive specific direction on how to bless God’s chosen people. Notice how this inspired benediction connects God’s face, His countenance, and His name.

“[Jehovah] spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, “[Jehovah] bless you and keep you; [Jehovah] make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; [Jehovah] lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. So shall they put My name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.’”

CHAPTER 7

Be Still and Know

This intentional approach to seeking God by singing, giving thanks, and blessing His name has proven effective for me in connecting with the living God. As I sense His nearness, I have differing responses. Some days I am quiet and soak in His nearness, while other days I ask Him to give me ears to hear what He is saying to me, which I address in the next chapter.

Psalms 37:7 encourages us to “be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him!” It is always good to be close to God. I believe it is my responsibility to do what I can to order my way aright and draw near to God, and I am content as I wait before Him.

When one of our sons was two or three years old, he would position himself in the middle of the house and call, “Mama!” Sandi would come to him and ask what he needed. He replied, “I just want to be near you.” Some days I just want to be near God and sense His closeness. I echo the words of the Psalmist, who wrote: “It is good to be near God.” (Psalm 73:28)

Here are several additional passages that encourage us to be still in His presence.

“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him!” (Psalm 37:7)

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Psalm 34:8)

“The LORD is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.” (Habakkuk 2:20)

“Thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.’” (Isaiah 30:15)

“Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” (Psalm 27:14)

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.” (Psalm 62:5–7)

“I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His Word I hope.” (Psalm 130:5)

“My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.” (Psalm 130:6)

“He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of His people He will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.’” (Isaiah 25:8–9)

“They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

“The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.” (Lamentations 3:25)

“It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.” (Lamentations 3:26)

“You, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” (Jude 20–21)

One reason I like to walk and be outside when I devote myself to seeking God is to eliminate distractions and avoid “sleeping in the Lord.” When I lean back in my soft recliner chair and attempt to be still and know God, I generally become still and snooze. However, when I am walking, I am awake and can enjoy Him in His creation. With the wind blowing, the sun shining, and white clouds hanging in the blue sky, I revel in being near to God.

When God began to lead me to seek Him and deepen my relationship with Him, my heart’s desire was to taste and see, or experience, God. I sought to establish a rhythm of regular times of communing with Him, for I love spending time with my Dad. I am also learning more about God in these times. Waiting on God and being still in His company has increased my knowledge of God. “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

No time spent in God’s presence is ever wasted. May God help us to respond to the exhortation of Hosea: “Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know Him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring. (Hosea 6:3 NLT)

CHAPTER 8

Speak, Lord, Your Servant Is Listening

It was 6:30 in the evening, and Adventures in Odyssey was on the radio. The adventure that night took place at the time of the Judges in Scripture, when Eli was the chief priest and Hannah had brought her son, Samuel, to live and serve at the House of the Lord in Shiloh. I settled back to enjoy the drama, but I did not expect to learn much, for I was familiar with the account of God speaking to Samuel. Yet as I listened, I was moved to tears.

“The boy Samuel served the LORD by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the LORD were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon. One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God. Suddenly the LORD called out, ‘Samuel!’ ‘Yes?’ Samuel replied. ‘What is it?’ He got up and ran to Eli. ‘Here I am. Did you call me?’ ‘I didn’t call you,’ Eli replied. ‘Go back to bed.’ So he did.

Then the LORD called out again, ‘Samuel!’ Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. ‘Here I am. Did you call me?’ ‘I didn’t call you, my son,’ Eli said. ‘Go back to bed.’

Samuel did not yet know the LORD because he had never had a message from the LORD before. So the LORD called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. ‘Here I am. Did you call me?’ Then Eli realized it was the LORD Who was calling the boy.

So he said to Samuel, ‘Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, ‘Speak,

LORD, Your servant is listening.’ So Samuel went back to bed. And the LORD came and called as before, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel replied, ‘Speak, Your servant is listening.’” (1 Samuel 3:1–11 NLT)

In answer to Samuel’s prayer, God spoke to this earnest young boy. The story is so simple, yet so profound. The old prophet Eli had not trained his own sons well, but he taught one of the greatest prophets in the history of Israel how to hear God’s voice. There was a process, an order, a way to hear God’s voice. Eli knew how to hear God, and he passed this knowledge on to Samuel.

After I have come into God’s presence singing, giving thanks, and blessing His name, I sometimes simply say, “Speak, Lord; Your servant is listening.” With childlike faith, I am asking God to speak with me. God has answered this prayer many times. I don’t know that I have heard an audible voice, but He has communicated words, thoughts, and Scriptures to my heart and mind as I listen.

SHAMA

Twice in 1 Samuel 3:9–10, the word listening is found. Some translations use the word hears. The first time is when Eli counsels Samuel and the second time when Samuel follows his directions and tells God to speak for he is listening or hearing. The Hebrew word is the verb *shama* which means to hear.

“He (Eli) said to Samuel, “Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, ‘Speak, [Jehovah], your servant is

listening.” So Samuel went back to bed. And the [Jehovah] came and called as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel replied, “Speak, your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9–10 NLT)

The same Hebrew word is used by Solomon in his profound prayer. In this case, it is often rendered understanding, however it could also be hearing.

“Give me an understanding (hearing) heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great people of Yours?” (1 Kings 3:9 NLT)

When we ask God to give us ears to hear so we can listen and hear, we are also asking Him for understanding. May we always say yes when God calls to us as in Isaiah 55:3 NLT, “Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen (*shama*), and you will find life.”

EARS TO HEAR

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Seven different times this phrase is used in the book of Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). In each of these verses in Revelation, God is speaking to the church. These are believers in Jesus who are being exhorted to listen up and use their ears. Many times, I have asked God to give me ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. I don’t assume that because I have sought God through the principles of Psalm 100, He will automatically show up. He may communicate with me without my asking. However, I have learned that God appreciates being asked.

When God addresses the church in Laodicea, He is standing in the hallway, patiently and persistently knocking, waiting for an invitation to come in. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone

hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:20) I used to mistakenly believe that God was addressing unbelievers in this passage. More than once, I have been in church services where the preacher will knock on the podium and appeal to those who do not know Jesus to respond to His knocking. He will implore them to open the door of their heart and receive Him as their Savior.

However, as I began reading God’s Word for myself, I discovered He was talking to those who had already chosen to follow Him. It seems it is possible to be a believer in Jesus but not be close to Him. As someone has sagely commented, “If God seems far away, who moved?” It is not Jesus, for He is patiently and persistently seeking to share a meal with us. May God help me to not leave Jesus in the hallway, but invite Him to be an integral and intimate part of my life.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD SPEAKS

“He Who enters by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. To Him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. When He has brought out all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.” (John 10:2–4)

“I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. So there will be one flock, one Shepherd.” (John 10:14–16)

God knows His sheep, and His sheep know the voice of their Shepherd. I am

learning to listen to God and recognize His still, small voice.

OUR ENEMY

We have an enemy who is a liar and a deceiver. I need to be careful when I seek the living God, for the devil is also able to communicate to the saints and is a clever counterfeiter. In 1 John 4:1, John writes, “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.” Having read the Bible through so many times helps me in this process. I believe that nothing God communicates to me will contradict what He has already revealed in His Word. I like to think of insights I receive as illuminations of what I have already read and studied in Scripture. I continue to go deeper in my comprehension of God and His inspired Word. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)

Jesus has already taught us that false prophets will arise to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. “Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There he is,’ don’t believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones.” (Matthew 24:23–24 NLT)

Certainly, we must be on our guard against false prophets and deceptive spirits, but let us not allow our concern of being led astray keep us from seeking to be led aright. God has been communicating with His people since the Garden of Eden, and He desires to be in a close, vital relationship with His children today.

GOD IS ALIVE

One of my callings is to speak at conferences, camps, and retreats. After years of preparing for workshops and seminars, I have a plethora of notes and outlines. Even though I have delivered many presentations, I continue to seek to improve my content. One of the joys I have experienced is waking up in the morning with a new insight or a better illustration. It is then that I remember this passage that describes what has just transpired: “The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning He awakens; He awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.” (Isaiah 50:4)

Isaiah also encourages me to seek God for guidance. “Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide Himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.” (Isaiah 30:20–21) Perhaps this passage is an Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament phrase “led by the Spirit.” “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)

May God continue to give us ears to hear what He is communicating to each of His children. “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak.” (John 16:12–13)

GOD COMMUNICATES

“God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men.” (Job 33:14–15)

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. Abraham had dreams. Abimelech, Laban, Jacob, Solomon, and Joseph had dreams. Daniel had dreams. What impresses me about Daniel is that even though God gave him visions and dreams, he still maintained his daily discipline of praying and seeking God three times a day.

This encourages me to continue good habits, whether I have special times with God or not. Some days when I go for my walks and read my Bible, the Word of God comes alive. Other times, not so much. Either way, I’m committed to sticking to my routine and maintaining my daily discipline. I follow a schedule to read through the Bible each year. I have a prayer list for each day of the week. This book is about the third part of how I order my day in coming into His presence. As I follow these practices, it is up to God to give the dreams and visions when it’s the right time. My responsibility is to present myself regularly before Him.

Moses met God in a burning bush, and later God spoke to him as a friend. Elijah was another prophet who heard God’s voice. “And [God] said, ‘Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.’ And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the

entrance of the cave.” (1 Kings 19:11–13) Elijah knew God well enough to recognize His voice. He knew that God was not speaking in the fire, nor in the earthquake, nor in the wind.

The Apostle Paul heard God’s voice, which led to his conversion. “As he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’” (Acts 9:3–4) As you read through the Bible, take note of the many people God spoke to and the many ways He led them.

GIVE US EARS TO HEAR

I believe we each need to take some initiative and invite Jesus to communicate with us. Instead of expecting God to take all the initiative, I can do my part to meet God halfway by asking Him to give me ears to hear what He is saying.

“Ears to hear and eyes to see—both are gifts from the LORD.” (Proverbs 20:12 NLT)

“In sacrifice and offering You have not delighted, but You have given me an open ear.” (Psalm 40:6) Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Hindrances to Communing with God

OBSTACLE: SIN

“Listen! The LORD’s arm is not too weak to save you, nor is His ear too deaf to hear you call. It’s your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, He has turned away and will not listen anymore.” (Isaiah 59:1–2 NLT)

Sin is a problem we all face. It separates us from God. Adam and Eve sinned, and when God came to enjoy their fellowship, they hid themselves in the garden. They were ashamed and experienced guilt for the first time. They hid from their loving Creator. Instead of being in unity with God, they now were tasting the awful separation that is precipitated by our sin.

“They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:8)

ANTIDOTE: JESUS

Before Jesus was born, an angel appeared to Joseph and confirmed Jesus’s purpose in coming to earth. “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20–21)

When we sin, we must acknowledge it, confess it, and ask for forgiveness to be restored to harmony with God. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to

forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) There are many instances in Scripture of this powerful restoration of people to God after sinning. One of the most striking concerns King David, the man after God’s heart. He grievously committed murder and adultery. His repentant plea and subsequent restoration are found in Psalm 51.

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” (Psalm 51:1–2, 10–12)

Thank God that “as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:11–12)

OBSTACLE: DOES GOD LIKE ME?

I battled this barrier for decades. I knew God loved me, for He loved the world. However, I mistakenly believed He only liked me when I performed well and was diligently seeking first His kingdom.

ANTIDOTE: GOD'S WORD

Consider that since Jesus was a delight to His Father, and we are loved the same way as He was loved (John 15:9), then because of Jesus cleansing and clothing us in His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:17–21), we are a delight to God as well!

“After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on Him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My dearly loved Son, Who brings Me great joy.’” (Matthew 3:16 NLT)

“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.” (John 15:9)

“God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

“I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38–39)

OBSTACLE: HAPPIER AT A DISTANCE

I think about the children of Israel who were gathered around Mount Sinai when God came down in all His glory. He descended upon the top of the mountain, and the people were awestruck. “When all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.’” (Exodus 20:18–19) The people wanted God at arm’s length. They

implored Moses to talk to God for them and be their intermediary.

A couple of verses earlier, it says the people stood far off while Moses drew near to the thick, dark mass where God was. Moses wasn’t put off by the thunder, the lightning, and the darkness. He came close to God and pressed towards Him. His attitude was, “If God is in that cloud, then that’s where I want to be.” I hope that God will help us to move outside of our comfort zones and pursue Him on the mountain or in the cloud.

ANTIDOTE: PRAY FOR A THIRST

“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. I have seen You in Your sanctuary and gazed upon Your power and glory. Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I praise You! I will praise You as long as I live, lifting up my hands to You in prayer. You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise You with songs of joy. I lie awake thinking of You, meditating on You through the night. Because You are my Helper, I sing for joy in the shadow of Your wings. I cling to You; Your strong right hand holds me securely.” (Psalm 63:1–8 NLT)

When I pray, I like to remember this promise: “This is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.” (1 John 5:14–15)

God says that if we ask ANYTHING according to His will, we have the request. I know that it is God’s will for me to love Him with all my heart. When I ask God to help me love Him, love my wife, love my children,

or love my enemies, I know He will answer my prayer. I also believe He will give us a desire to know Him and hunger and thirst for Him like David.

“Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4) I used to think that this verse was about God giving me the desires I already had in my heart. Now when I read it, I ask God to give me the desire to know and love Him, while delighting in Him! “You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11)

OBSTACLE: A HARD HEART

Zechariah 7:11–12 contains sobering words: “They refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets.”

God can seem far away as a result of the condition of our own hearts. To enter into the zone where God can communicate with us requires us to have soft hearts and teachable spirits.

If we do not know whether our hearts are hard, we can read Scripture to help us discern our own condition, for “the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

ANTIDOTE: SPIRITUAL HEART SURGERY

Only God can soften the human heart, for, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and test the mind.” (Jeremiah 17:9–10)

Let’s ask God, as David did, to “create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10) For “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

I have experienced hardness of heart, when the Word of God was uninspiring and I was not with the program. I felt out of sync with heaven, and the things of God did not seem real. I discovered this encouraging passage in Ezekiel, which I have used as a basis for prayer many times: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:25–26)

Since it is God’s will for us to have soft, pliable hearts, I know that when I ask God to give me a heart of flesh, He will answer my request. He can replace our stony heart with a heart of flesh.

OBSTACLE: A LACK OF FAITH

This is another legitimate concern, for “whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

ANTIDOTE: INCREASE YOUR FAITH

“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’” (Luke 17:5) Faith is defined in the first verse of Hebrews 11: “Faith

is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

I have observed that the more consistent I am in reading God’s Word, the more my faith increases. His Word is living and active. I am strengthened as I read accounts of how God led the Israelites through the Red Sea and into the Promised Land. My faith grows as I follow Jesus through the gospels. I am inspired by the Spirit of God working through the disciples in Acts. Truly, “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17)

I also cling to faith-strengthening promises like, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8) and, “Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13)

OBSTACLE: GOD SEEMS DISTANT

There are biblical reasons why God seems far away, such as sin, a hard heart, or a lack of faith, all of which we have addressed. Assuming we have confessed our sin; believed in the blood of Jesus; have a soft, teachable heart; and are full of faith; what do we do when we pray and feel like we are not being heard?

ANTIDOTE: ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

Scripture has plenty of encouragement that God always hears our prayers. Praying always counts.

Consider this image in heaven: “When He took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.” (Revelation 5:8 NLT)

God’s people pray, and God stores up those prayers of faith. In the context of this

verse, we learn that in the end times, events are going to transpire that are connected to those bowls of incense we have helped to fill with our prayers. At the perfect time and in the appropriate way, He will answer them. Seeking God is NEVER in vain. Every prayer is being stored up.

I find such encouragement in the life of Daniel. He prayed and did not see an answer for weeks. “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.... Then He said to me, ‘Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.’” (Daniel 10:2–3, 12)

The first day that Daniel set his heart to understand, his words were heard. I have thought about this many times since 2011, when I set myself to seek God by asking Him to help me love Him with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). He heard those prayers, and because they were according to His will (1 John 5:14–15), He began answering them in unexpected ways. As I look back, I can see how He knew exactly what I needed and how best to proceed. I just needed to ask. Even though it took several years before God fully answered my request, I now find myself loving Him more than ever. Thanks be to God.

CHAPTER 10

If My People

I WILL BLESS THE LORD

As you know, God directed me to apply the principles of Psalm 100 a few years ago. The primary objective at that time was to deepen my relationship with the Living God and learn more about worshiping God in spirit and in truth. For the past few years, I have been wonderfully edified by following the Spirit's leading. I have grown in my understanding of God and tasted His presence on numerous occasions. This approach has become a lifestyle for me, and I find myself joining with David and Paul, who continually sang praises, gave thanks, and praised God's name.

Paul, "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:18–20)

David, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." (Psalm 34:1)

"I will sing praise to my God while I have being." (Psalm 104:33)

A VERY PRESENT HELP

While I have been reveling in God's nearness, the spiritual climate of the world in which we live has darkened. I find that drawing near to God is not only a welcome addition to my spiritual life – it has become a lifeline. I need God like never before. Our

nation needs God. When I see the needs around me, I seek God for fresh hope and encouragement. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

As I have been listening to the Spirit, my attention has been drawn to the prayer of Solomon. Most of us are familiar with verse 14, but in this season of a worldwide virus, I notice how appropriate verse 13 is to our situation.

"When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:13–14)

These inspired words are directed to God's people. This is not an exhortation to all the citizens of our present world, but to "My people who are called by My name." As God's people humble themselves, pray, and seek His face, He will hear us, and divinely forgive our sins and heal our land.

We certainly deserve to be punished for our many national sins. Without enumerating all of them, taking millions of innocent lives of unborn children is enough to incur God's wrath. As followers of Jesus, may we each turn and repent of our sins and look to God for forgiveness and healing.

Notice the expression "seek My face." Earlier in the book, we discussed how this

phrase is synonymous with “come into His presence.” While I continue to find joy in seeking God, I find that my seeking God is not only a way to enhance my relationship with Him, it is also an essential part in believing for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus, the ball is in our court. We have the privilege, and the responsibility, to turn from our wicked ways and seek God. In so doing, God promises that He will move. May we truly humble ourselves, repent of our sins, pray, and come into His presence, so that He will hear our prayers, forgive our sins, and heal our land.

IN HIS PRESENCE

I am aware that the first ten chapters of this book are upbeat and joyful, while the tenor of this chapter is sober. Yet these two emotions are not mutually exclusive. As believers in Jesus, we can experience joy even in distress. When I was a young believer, my brother died in an automobile accident. My friends came out to comfort me and stand by our family in our distress. I was asked to deliver the sermon at the memorial service held for Brian. However, after a few days grieving with our family, I was spent. A friend suggested we go to a side room near the sanctuary and pray. As we knelt and asked God for help, and He drew near in a remarkable way, I arose and experienced joy and grief simultaneously. I sensed God’s presence which filled me with joy while grieving over the loss of my younger brother.

“You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy.”
(Psalm 16:11)

Regardless of the state of our country, God is our Rock and His eternal Word

reminds us that, “Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.” (Psalm 144:15 KJV)

CHAPTER 11

God Desires to be Near His Children

FELLOWSHIP TO FEAR

In the book of Genesis, after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, we receive a glimpse into what life was like before the fall. It appears that as part of their daily rhythm, God spent time communing with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day.

“[Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’” (Genesis 3:8–10)

God continued to seek to maintain intimate fellowship with the first couple, but their sin caused them to experience guilt and shame. Instead of joyfully responding to God’s call, for the first time they were afraid of God and hid themselves.

GOD IN THE WILDERNESS

As I read through the account of the Exodus, I am blessed by how close God was to His people during their captivity in Egypt and in their wanderings in the wilderness. He was ever near to the children of Israel. It does not seem the Israelite people were fully aware of His nearness in the midst of cataclysmic events, but God never left their side.

“The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.” (Exodus 13:21)

“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” (Exodus 17:6)

“I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:1–4)

“Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ Jesus then said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ They said to Him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.’” (John 6:31–35)

“The LORD your God Who goes before you will Himself fight for you, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries

his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.” (Deuteronomy 1:30–31)

“I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet.” (Deuteronomy 29:5)

GOD WITH US

In Jesus, God comes very near. One of His names is Immanuel, which means “God with us”.

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).” (Matthew 1:23)

“Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:8–9)

“In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1 NLT)

“The Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.” (John 1:14 NLT)

“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:20 KJV)

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

GOD THE SPIRIT, WITH US FOREVER

After the resurrection, Jesus met with the disciples. “He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3) Then He instructed them to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit would be poured out on them. Jesus had already told

them He would not leave them as orphans but send the Spirit to be with them forever. God’s heart is to be with us always and forever.

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans.” (John 14:16–18)

GOD OUR BRIDEGROOM

Marriage, which was designed by God in Genesis, is a picture of the ultimate communion: the marriage of the Lamb and His Bride, the church. As significant as will be the many signs and wonders in the last days, none are of greater importance than Jesus marrying us, His church.

“Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure’ — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.” (Revelation 19:7–8)

GOD’S HEART

God longs to be with His people, and God never changes. Consider the heart of Jesus when He looked over Jerusalem and said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37)

Since that sad evening in the garden of Eden, after sin had entered and caused Adam and Eve to hide from His presence in shame, God has never relented in His desire to restore what was lost. He sent Jesus to

take away our sin and reconcile us to the Father. Thanks be to God for His incredible love for His people. We will soon marry Him and dwell with Him forever.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.’” (Revelation 21:1–3)

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES

God’s Word gives us hope and encouragement to seek Him. Let’s read these inspired words and press near to God.

“Come close to God, and God will come close to you.” (James 4:8 NLT)

“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

“Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His presence continually!” (Psalm 105:4)

“Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.” (Isaiah 55:6)

“You have said, ‘Seek My face.’ My heart says to You, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’” (Psalm 27:8)

PRESSING ONWARD AND UPWARD

Thank you for reading thus far. It is my hope and prayer that the Scriptures I have referenced, along with my testimony, will encourage you in your walk with God.

When I first met Jesus at a summer camp in Colorado, I received Him as my Savior and knew that He was real. I sensed that I was cleansed, and I was aware of God in a new

way. When I rededicated my life to Him in college, I experienced more transformation. I understood that when we turn to God, He does make us new creations.

When I communed with God on a granite overlook in the Pocono Mountains in 2014, I had read the entire Bible through over thirty times, and I knew a lot about God. But my knowledge was from a safe distance. On that rocky ledge, I was so close to God I could almost touch Him. I sensed His kindness in a new way. And His patience. And His goodness. My heart was singing and satisfied to be with Him.

TURN ASIDE OR TURN AWAY

Adam and Eve were the first to hide or turn away from God. “They heard the sound of [Jehovah] God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of [Jehovah] God among the trees of the garden. But [Jehovah] God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:8–9)

The Hebrew root for the word “presence” is *paneh* or *panim* which are nouns and literally translated face or faces. I find it interesting as I dug into this word to discover that the root word for these nouns is the verb *panah* which means to turn, or turn your face. Adam and Eve turned away their face and hid themselves from the face, countenance, or presence of God.

Sadly the children of Adam and Eve have continued this propensity to turn away from God, instead of turning towards God. “Thus said the Lord [Jehovah], the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” But you were unwilling.” (Isaiah 30:15)

“When all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.’ ... The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.” (Exodus 20:18-19, 21)

Moses was an exception. “The angel of [Jehovah] appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, ‘I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.’ When [Jehovah] saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’” (Exodus 3:2–4)

THE HEART OF GOD

Jesus, God in the flesh, reveals the everlasting of heart of God to be gather His people to His breast. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let Me.” (Matthew 23:37)

Since God is calling us to come into His presence, let’s join Moses, and David, and Paul, and other people of God and turn towards Him and press on to truly know Him.

“Let us know; let us press on to know [Jehovah]; His going out is sure as the dawn; He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.” (Hosea 6:3)

“I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” (Philippians 3:8)

GIVEN, FOUND, OPENED

I don’t believe I have ever seen a title with these words. Yet they are the result of asking-seeking-knocking. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” (Luke 11:9)

My brother lives on a river in Florida. One evening he was taking me for a short ride in his boat. We noticed many people standing and sitting along the banks fishing. I turned to Jeff and asked him if he liked to go fishing. I loved his reply. “I don’t enjoy fishing, I enjoy catching. I don’t want to be a fisherman, I want to be a catcher-man.”

As much as I enjoy seeking God, it is even better finding God. Thank God that He is always faithful to keep His promises. When we ask, He gives. When we seek, we find. When we knock, the door into His presence is opened.

By coming into His presence through singing, giving thanks, and blessing His name, I am tasting and seeing that the LORD is good! (Psalm 34:8) I feel as if I have been born again, again! This is my niche. I was created and designed to be in fellowship with the living God.

Let’s pray.

Father, work deep in our hearts by Your Good Spirit. Help us to love You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Give us an appetite to be in Your presence. Help us to taste and see that You are good. In the wonderful name of Jesus, amen.

“Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know Him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring.” (Hosea 6:3 NLT)

CHAPTER 12

Portal into His Presence

I am writing this new chapter to the book in 2022. God has led me very clearly to adopt this pattern of seeking God according to Psalm 100. I have encountered the living God scores of times as I have sought God according to His Word.

David did not write this psalm lightly. This was not a simple poem found in his journal. Each word is inspired and worthy of study. These inspired Scriptures open a portal into the very presence of God.

In 2 Samuel 23:2, David declares, “The Spirit of [Jehovah] speaks by me; His Word is on my tongue.”

Jesus affirmed the inspiration of David when speaking to the chief priests and scribes: “He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls Him Lord?” (Matthew 22:43) The apostles also affirmed the efficacy of the Psalms in Acts 1:16, “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas.”

In The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, by C. S. Lewis, the Pevensie children enter Narnia through a special wardrobe in the home of a kind professor who had himself been to this magical land. The wardrobe was a portal, an entrance, into a unique place where the four children met Aslan. Yes, they also had many wonderful adventures, but the ultimate prize was encountering the golden lion himself.

ACCORDING TO THE RULE

For those of you who are familiar with the Old Testament, you will know the accounts of David seeking to bring up the ark to Jerusalem. The ark is a central focus of the nation of Israel and David desires to bring it to Jerusalem. The ark has been in the tabernacle, which was built under the direction of Moses, who carefully followed the pattern which God had revealed to him on the mount. “Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain.” (Exodus 26:30)

The temple had not yet been built by Solomon. When Solomon became king, he would eventually build it according the design that God would reveal to David. However at this juncture, David had provided a tent, had consulted with his advisors, and the great day had arrived. Here is the inspired record from 1 Chronicles 13:1–10:

“David consulted with the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with every leader. And David said to all the assembly of Israel, ‘If it seems good to you and from [Jehovah] our God, let us send abroad to our brothers who remain in all the lands of Israel, as well as to the priests and Levites in the cities that have pasturelands, that they may be gathered to us. Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it in the days of Saul.’ All the assembly agreed to do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

So David assembled all Israel from the Nile of Egypt to Lebo-hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim. And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim that belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of [Jehovah] who sits enthroned above the cherubim. And they carried the ark of God on a new cart, from the house of Abinadab, and Uzzah and Ahio were driving the cart. And David and all Israel were celebrating before God with all their might, with song and lyres and harps and tambourines and cymbals and trumpets.

And when they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put out his hand to take hold of the ark, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of [Jehovah] was kindled against Uzzah, and He struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark, and he died there before God.” (1 Chronicles 13:1-10)

BACK TO THE BIBLE

I can not imagine what David felt. His heart motivation was pure, He had consulted with others before undertaking this massive event, and now this young king finds himself standing in the street before the whole nation of Israel, the procession has stopped, and Uzzah is dead.

If you read this account in 2 Samuel 6, that is where the story ends. Thankfully we also have 1 Chronicles 15. David is driven to the Bible. He could have been discouraged and given up hope. He could have lived in his anger and shaken his fist at God. Instead he searched the Scriptures. I could summarize, but the Word of God is wonderful.

“David built houses for himself in the city of David. And he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then

David said that no one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, for [Jehovah] had chosen them to carry the ark of [Jehovah] and to minister to him forever. And David assembled all Israel at Jerusalem to bring up the ark of [Jehovah] to its place, which he had prepared for it. And David gathered together the sons of Aaron and the Levites.” (1 Chronicles 15:1–4)

“Then David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab, and said to them, ‘You are the heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites. Consecrate yourselves, you and your brothers, so that you may bring up the ark of [Jehovah], the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it. Because you did not carry it the first time, [Jehovah] our God broke out against us, because we did not seek him according to the rule.’ So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of [Jehovah], the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of [Jehovah].” (1 Chronicles 15:11–15)

Notice the expression according to the rule. In the NASB these words are rendered “according to the ordinance” and in the KJV the expression is “after the due order.” David went back to the Pentateuch and discovered that the ark was not to be transported on a cart, but carried by the Levites on their shoulders with poles. (See Numbers 7:7–9 and 10:17, 21)

I can’t help but think of the wisdom of Solomon, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” (Proverbs 14:12) A wagon seemed sight, but it was not according to the rule, or the ordinance, or the pattern which God had directed.

ALONE WITH THE SHEEP, AND THE SPIRIT

When we first meet David in 1 Samuel 16, Samuel has gone to anoint the next king of Israel. David is not present, for as the youngest, he was tending the sheep. Samuel anoints David, and his next appearance is playing the lyre before King Saul. An evil spirit was tormenting him so “Saul said to his servants, ‘Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me.’” One of the young men answered, ‘Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and [Jehovah] is with him.’” (1 Samuel 16:17–18)

David is enlisted to serve the king and continues to care for the sheep of his father Jesse. “David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem.” (1 Samuel 17:15) It was on one of his trips to the court of Saul that he first heard of the challenge of Goliath. His heart is stirred and he offers to fight the giant. But Saul is dubious.

“Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.’ But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.’ And David said, ‘[Jehovah] who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will

deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’” (1 Samuel 17:33–37)

God was preparing David to defend His chosen people by having him defend sheep from lions and bears. The wilderness was the school of adversity which equipped David for all of his later work. Not only did he defend sheep from predators, he had to find green pastures, still waters, and places of refuge. He used these shepherd skills as he and hundreds of men with their families fled from Saul for many years in this same wilderness.

David also learned to know God. He learned how to play the lyre. He learned how to worship. He discovered the principles of Psalm 100, alone, in a wilderness, taught by the Spirit. David connected with the living God. David experienced the presence of God. With these thoughts in mind, consider Psalm 27:4–6, “One thing I have asked from [Jehovah], that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of [Jehovah] all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of [Jehovah] And to meditate in His temple. For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to [Jehovah].” (NASB)

CONFLUENCE

Not only did practicing these principles enhance David’s own communion with God, they provided the foundation for the future of temple worship. David and the elders installed the ark based on David’s study of Scripture and his rediscover of the pattern or the rule for the Levites to carry the ark. David also had understanding of how to come into the presence of God which the

Spirit taught him in the wilderness. God wonderfully brought these revelations together in 1 Chronicles 15 and 16.

“David commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy.” (1 Chronicles 15:16)

“David and the elders of Israel and the commanders of thousands went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-edom with rejoicing.” (1 Chronicles 15:25)

“David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as also were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers. And David wore a linen ephod. So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres.” (1 Chronicles 15:27–28)

“And they brought in the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God.” (1 Chronicles 16:1)

“Then he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of [Jehovah], to invoke, to thank, and to praise [Jehovah], the God of Israel. Asaph was the chief, and second to him were Zechariah, Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, who were to play harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals, and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God. Then on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to [Jehovah] by Asaph and his brothers.” (1 Chronicles 16:4–7)

Then David declared: “Oh give thanks to [Jehovah]; call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him; sing praises to Him, tell of all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek [Jehovah] rejoice! Seek [Jehovah] and His strength; seek His presence continually!” (1 Chronicles 16:8–11)

ORDERS HIS WAY ARIGHT

As I mentioned in the beginning of the book, the Spirit quickened this verse to me on one of my walks, “He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God.” (Psalm 50:23 NASB)

At the time, I took this as confirmation that I was on the right track in seeking God following the dictates of Psalm 100. I now have a growing conviction that these principles are more universal than I had believed. God has provided a portal into His presence. David certainly was convinced of approaching God through anointed singing, praise, and giving thanks. This is why on “on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to [Jehovah] by Asaph and his brothers.” God had taught Him how to come near to Him. May we not stand on the outside looking in, but “seek His presence continually.” Amen.

CHAPTER 13

Meditations on Names and Attributes of God

Now that we have examined the components found in Psalm 100, I hope your faith has been increased and you have a desire to enter into His presence. To assist you in your pursuit of God, I have assembled forty-two topical meditations to enhance our knowledge of God and our communion with Him. These are guides for coming close to God.

The first section is titled "Preparation" and is a collection of Scripture passages focusing on an attribute of God with occasional comments. As you familiarize yourself with this theme, you may think of other verses to add to the ones I have chosen. I am not trying to be exhaustive, but simply prime the pump in seeking and knowing God.

"Sing" is on the next page and is accompanied by the number of a song I selected from *Hymns for Family Worship* which is in keeping with this character quality of God. I chose hymns which help me "sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also." (1 Corinthians 14:15) You may think of other worship songs that inspire you in keeping with this particular attribute of God. This book comes with piano accompaniment on four CDs. You may purchase it online at store.demmelearning.com or you may download an e-book with the lyrics and the score at buildingfaithfamilies.org/familyworship/

"Give Thanks" offers prayers of thanksgiving based on Bible verses, which are designed to assist you in getting your

thanks muscles warmed up and provide some direction for giving thanks. Once you fully enter thanks mode, you may think of other items for which to be thankful. Jot them down in the spaces provided for your future reference.

"Bless His Name" or as some translations of Psalm 100 render this expression, "Praise His name." I have selected passages of Scripture to stimulate praise for God's name and worship Him for Who He is. In each study there are also short prayers of praise to help the reader in this special exercise. This opportunity to "Bless" and "Praise" God's name was new to me at first, and I had to work at expanding my vocabulary to include words such as: adore, exalt, extol, glorify, hallelujah, honor, hosanna, magnify, praise, and worship. It is an awesome privilege to praise God's name. There is also room for you to jot down notes and insights you have received in coming into His presence.

SAINTS OF OLD

As we bless God's name, we join with saints of old and the host of heaven who magnify God.

David, "Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever." (Psalm 145:2)

Daniel, "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever." (Daniel 2:20)

Isaiah, "O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you

have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.” (Isaiah 25:1)

Additional themed studies are under construction and can be found here: buildingfaithfamilies.org/comeintohispresence.

WALK, WORSHIP, SIT AND BE STILL

As you know, I prefer to walk as I worship. If I am unable to follow this pattern, then I sit and am still before God. Regardless of which approach works best for you, I hope you will find unique and personal ways to come close to God by applying these principles.

The attributes of God which I have chosen are by no means exhaustive. I do hope they whet your appetite for God and His Word, inspiring you to develop your own topical studies. The objective is to connect with the living God and “taste and see” for yourself that He is good. Focusing on God’s attributes has proven to be such an edifying practice for me and my communion with Our Dad that I continue to create more of these studies. At the end of this book, I have a growing list of character qualities that you might find helpful as you begin your own foray into the nature and person of our good God. I will continue to post more studies online at buildingfaithfamilies.org/comeintohispresence

PODCASTS

Many of these studies have served as the basis for podcasts, which you can access here if you are interested: buildingfaithfamilies.org/podcasts

CREATING A STUDY

Here are a few tips that I have used to explore a particular aspect of God’s character. After the Spirit of God quickens an attribute

of God, normally a few Scriptures will come to mind, since I have read the Bible through cover to cover many times. Often, a hymn will also spring to my consciousness. Then, I use my laptop computer to search through key words associated with this attribute in a concordance. I generally keep at least two translations open on my screen.

I also use the thesaurus and sometimes the dictionary to explore key words and find good definitions. There are so many resources online that I find myself accessing them by searching the internet.

After I have assembled quite a few verses, then I sift through the different passages and look for verses which are particularly applicable. Being in the Word of God an hour or so per day, in addition to my own daily Bible reading, is so strengthening to my faith.

COME UNTO ME

God is our Father, and He is always encouraging us to come close to Him. He is seeking people to worship Him in spirit and in truth. He delights in us, His adopted children, because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. Paul ends his second letter to the Corinthians with this benediction or blessing, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*. The Strong’s Greek defines this word as participation, sharing in, communion, or fellowship. It is used 19 times in the New testament to speak of the fellowship of believers, but it also is used to describe our fellowship with God Himself.

“That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our

fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3)

Let us embrace the testimony of the writer of Hebrews and press near to God. “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19–22)

“Come close to God, and God will come close to you.” (James 4:8 NLT)

PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

These meditations or topical studies may also be used as Bible studies for your own edification or for family devotions. I have been blessed in searching the Scriptures to pull together passages that reveal more about God and His nature.

Learning more about God in His Word is always helpful and right; however, tasting and experiencing God adds another dimension to my relationship. God encourages us to worship Him in spirit, and in truth.

DAVID

Many of the Scripture references have been gleaned from the Psalms. David knew God, and he loved God. He longed to spend time with God. “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple.” (Psalm 27:4)

I am beginning to understand the heart of David and share in his longing. May God help us each to desire His person, and His presence, above all else.

STUDY ONE

PREPARE

Jesus, the Son of God

“[Jehovah] said to me, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your heritage, and the ends of the earth Your possession.’” (Psalm 2:7–8)

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, ‘Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!’

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ‘Don’t be afraid, Mary,’ the angel told her, ‘for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David. And He will reign over Israel forever; His Kingdom will never end!’

Mary asked the angel, ‘But how can this happen? I am a virgin.’

The angel replied, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and He will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:26–35 NLT) “His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 1:3–4)

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’? Or again, ‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son’? (Hebrews 1:3–5)

“A voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to Him!’” (Luke 9:35)

S I N G

Rejoice, the Lord is King! #58

Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing and triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Jesus the Savior reigns, the God of truth and love;
When He had purged our stains He took His seat above:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

His kingdom cannot fail: He rules o'er earth and heaven;
The keys of death and hell are to our Jesus giv'n:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Rejoice in glorious hope! Our Lord the Judge shall come
And take His servants up to their eternal home:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

He sits at God's right hand, till all His foes submit,
And bow to His command, and fall beneath His feet.
Lift up your heart! Lift up your voice! Rejoice again I say, rejoice!

He all His foes shall quell, shall all our sins destroy,
And every bosom swell with pure seraphic joy;
Lift up your heart! Lift up your voice! Rejoice again I say, rejoice!

G I V E T H A N K S

PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURES TO USE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR THANKING GOD:

Thank You, Father, for revealing Jesus as the Christ.

“Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven.’” (Matthew 16:16–17)

Thank You, Father, for sending Your Son to bear our sins.

“This is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

Thank You, Father, for sacrificing Your Son on our behalf.

“He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)

Thank You for giving us eternal life.

“Anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life.” (John 3:36 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

STUDY TWO

PREPARE

Jesus, the Son of Man

When Jesus talks about “the Son of Man” he may be referencing the way the Messiah is described in Daniel. “As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into His presence. He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey Him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13–14 NLT)

Jesus is not only the exalted Messiah, the Son of God, He is also human. “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.” (Matthew 1:1, 16)

“Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.” (Luke 2:4–5)

“Coming to His hometown He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And are not His brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all His sisters with us?’” (Matthew 13:54–56)

“The high priest said to him, ‘I adjure you by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matthew 26:63–64)

“No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” (John 3:13–14)

S I N G

Joy to the World, #19

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

G I V E T H A N K S

PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURES TO USE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR THANKING GOD:

Thank You for understanding our weakness and struggles.

“We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

Thank You for helping us in our temptation.

“Because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18)

Thank You for seeking and saving us.

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)

Thank You for extending mercy and grace when we need it most.

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

Thank You for humbling Yourself unto death for us.

“Being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURES TO ASSIST IN PRAISING HIS NAME:

With Peter, I testify that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“Jesus asked His disciples: ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (Matthew 16:13–16)

I adore You, Son of Man.

“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28)

I honor You, Son of Man.

“Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40)

I praise You, Son of Man..

““Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:30)

TAKEAWAYS:

STUDY THREE

PREPARE

Jesus, God Incarnate

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1:1–3)

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.” (1 John 4:2–3)

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh.” (Romans 1:1–3)

“God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” (Romans 8:3)

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4–5)

“Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6–8)

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Hebrews 2:14)

“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” (1 Timothy 3:16)

S I N G

Come, Thou Almighty King, #6

Come, Thou Almighty King,
Help us Thy name to sing,
Help us to praise:
Father, all glorious,
O'er all victorious,
Come and reign over us,
Ancient of Days.

Come, Thou Incarnate Word,
Gird on Thy mighty sword,
Our prayer attend:
Come and Thy people bless,
And give Thy word success,
Spirit of holiness,
On us descend.

Come, Holy Comforter,
Thy sacred witness bear
In this glad hour:
Thou who almighty art,
Now rule in every heart,
And ne'er from us depart,
Spirit of pow'r.

To the great One in Three
Eternal praises be,
Hence evermore:
His sov'reign majesty
May we in glory see,
And to eternity
Love and adore.

G I V E T H A N K S

PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURES TO USE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR THANKING GOD:

Thank You for revealing Your glory.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

Thank You for redeeming us.

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4–5)

Thank You for emptying Yourself and being born in the likeness of men.

“Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:6–7)

Thank You for destroying the devil.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Hebrews 2:14)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

STUDY FOUR

PREPARE

Jesus, the Savior

“An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. ‘Joseph, son of David,’ the angel said, ‘do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’” (Matthew 1:20–21 NLT)

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.” (Luke 1:30–31)

“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11)

Hosea means “salvation.” Moses changed the name of his personal minister and the commander of the armies of Israel, to Joshua. Joshua means “Jehovah is his help,” or “Jehovah the Savior.”

“These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua.” (Numbers 13:16)

Joshua is the same name as Jesus in Hebrew. Two places in the New Testament, modern translations use the name Joshua. However the KJV uses the name Jesus, since the Greek word is Iesous, which in English is Jesus

“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus.” (Acts 7:44–45 KJV)

“If Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” (Hebrews 4:8 KJV)

Our Savior saves us from sin. Sin is our greatest enemy, for our sins lead to death. As we read in Romans 6:23: “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Our sins, or iniquities, also separate us from God. Isaiah 59:1–2 (NLT): “Listen! [Jehovah’s] arm is not too weak to save you, nor is His ear too deaf to hear you call. It’s your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, He has turned away and will not listen anymore.”

S I N G

Blessed Assurance, #1

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight!
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission – all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

G I V E T H A N K S

PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURES TO USE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR THANKING GOD:

Thank You for delivering us from evil.

“The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom: to Whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (2 Timothy 4:18 ASV)

Thank You for saving us from the works of the devil.

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)

Thank You for forgiving and cleansing us from sin.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Thank You for saving us according to your mercy.

“When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” (Titus 3:4–6)

Thank You for forgiving and baptizing us in the name of Jesus Christ.

“Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 2:38)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

STUDY FIVE

PREPARE

Jesus, the Word of God

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1:1–3)

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

“The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17)

“The law of [Yahweh] is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of [Yahweh] is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of [Yahweh] are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of [Yahweh] is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of [Yahweh] is clean, enduring forever; the rules of [Yahweh] are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.” (Psalms 19:7–10)

“In these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.” (Hebrews 1:2–3)

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God.” (Hebrews 11:3)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him.” (Colossians 1:15–16)

“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The One sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God.” (Revelation 19:11–13)

S I N G

How Firm a Foundation, #56

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

“In ev’ry condition, in sickness and health,
In poverty’s vale, or abounding in wealth,
At home or abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As thy days may demand shall thy strength ever be.

“Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, I will still give thee aid:
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My gracious, Omnipotent Hand.

“When thro’ the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow:
For I will be with thee, thy trouble to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

“When thro’ fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply:
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and Thy gold to refine.

“E’en down to old age all My people shall prove
My constant, eternal, unchangeable love:
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still on My bosom be borne.

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake!”

G I V E T H A N K S

PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURES TO USE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR THANKING GOD:

Thank You for eternal life.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My Word and believes Him Who sent Me has eternal life.” (John 5:24)

Thank You for the faith-building word of Christ.

“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17)

Thank You for the sharp and powerful Word of God.

“The Word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.” (Hebrews 4:12 NLT)

Thank You for the eternal, living Word of God.

“You have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living Word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURES TO ASSIST IN PRAISING HIS NAME:

I glorify the Word of God.

“He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God.” (Revelation 19:13)

I celebrate the Word Who is God.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

I magnify the eternal, living Word of God.

“You have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living Word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23 NLT)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, Son of David

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David.” (Matthew 1:1) “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?’ They said to him, ‘The son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, “‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies under Your feet’”? If then David calls him Lord, how is He his son?’” (Matthew 22:41–45)

“Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” (John 7:42)

“Out of the stump of David’s family will grow a shoot— yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him— the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. He will delight in obeying the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:1–3 NLT)

“You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me One Who is to be ruler in Israel, Whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” (Micah 5:2)

“David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons.” (1 Samuel 17:12)

“Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.” (Luke 2:4)

David was more than a shepherd boy who slew Goliath and became a king. He exhibited Christlike qualities. He foreshadowed the Messiah. God chose the youngest son of Jesse to enhance our understanding of some of the facets of Jesus. Jesus is like David, only more so. Where David was a faithful shepherd, Jesus is the Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

David was also a priest, and a warrior; he was chosen by God and anointed to be king. Jesus is the High Priest, the Conquering Warrior, the Chosen One, Christ the Anointed, and the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

S I N G

Crown Him with Many Crowns #14

Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne:
Hark! how the heav'nly anthem drowns
All music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of love:
Behold His hands and side;
Rich wounds, yet visible above,
In beauty glorified;
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his wond'ring eye
At mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of life:
Who triumphed o'er the grave,
Who rose victorious in the strife
For those He came to save;
His glories now we sing,
Who died and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring
And lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of heav'n,
One with the Father known,
One with the Spirit through Him giv'n
From yonder glorious throne.
To Thee be endless praise,
For Thou for us hast died,
Be Thou, O Lord, through endless days
Adored and magnified.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You, Jesus, for being our High Priest and praying for us.

“Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25)

Thank You, Jesus, for always leading us in victory.

“Thanks be to God, Who always leads us in triumph in Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 2:14 NASB)

Thank You, Spirit, for anointing Jesus.

“Behold My servant, Whom I uphold, My chosen, in Whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.” (Isaiah 42:1)

Thank You, Lord, for being our Judge, Lawgiver, King and Savior.

“The LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; He will save us.” (Isaiah 33:22)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I honor You, Jesus, the Great Shepherd.

“Our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep.” (Hebrews 13:20)

I praise You, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

“To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of [Jehovah] of hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 9:6–7)

I worship You, Jesus, Son of David.

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” (Revelation 22:16)

TAKEAWAYS:

STUDY SEVEN

P R E P A R E

Jesus, the Christ

The expression Jesus Christ, is more aptly translated, Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Messiah, or Jesus the Anointed. The word *Christos* in Greek is found over 500 times in the New Testament and is from the root word *chrío*, to anoint.

Throughout the Old Testament we see Kings, prophets, and priests anointed for service. “Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of [Jehovah] came mightily upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13 NASB)

From the first verse in the New Testament, we read that Jesus was conceived, anointed, and filled with the Spirit. Throughout His earthly ministry, He rejoiced in the Spirit, cast out demons by the Spirit, healed in the Spirit, taught in the Spirit, and depended on the Spirit. The Spirit and the Son were a divine team.

One of the most significant events in the Gospels is God revealing Jesus to be the Christ. “He (Jesus) asked His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (Matthew 16:13–16)

Four times *Christos* is rendered Messiah. “He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ).” (John 1:41)

I sometimes read “Anointed” in place of “Christ” to help me remember the special and unique relationship between the Son and the Spirit. “She (Mary) said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ (Anointed), the Son of God, Who is coming into the world.” (John 11:27)

“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:31)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” (1 John 4:2)

S I N G

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed, His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
To take away transgression, and rule in equity.

He shall come down like showers, upon the fruitful earth;
And love, joy, hope, like flowers, spring in His path to birth:
Before Him on the mountains, shall peace, the herald, go;
And righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.

Kings shall fall down before Him, and gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him, His praise all people sing;
For He shall have dominion o'er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion, or dove's light wing can soar.

To Him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end.
The mountain dews shall nourish a seed in weakness sown,
Whose fruit shall spread and flourish, and shake like Lebanon.

O'er every foe victorious, He on His throne shall rest,
From age to age more glorious, all-blessing and all-blest.
The tide of time shall never, His covenant remove;
His Name shall stand forever, His changeless Name of Love.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for leading us by Your Good Spirit.

“Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God! Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground!” (Psalm 143:10)

Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit as the Helper.

“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” (John 16:7)

Thank You for teaching us by Your Good Spirit.

“You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them.” (Nehemiah 9:20)

Thank You for anointing and sealing us with Your Spirit.

“It is God Who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and Who has also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (2 Corinthians 1:21–22)

Thank You for washing, justifying, and sanctifying us.

“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Thank you Spirit for coming upon Mary.

“The birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 1:18)

Thank you Spirit for anointing Jesus.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18–19)

Thank You Spirit for empowering Jesus to proclaim the truth

“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.” (Matthew 12:18)

Thank you God for anointing Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” (Acts 10:38)

TAKEAWAYS:

STUDY EIGHT

PREPARE

Jesus, the Light of the World

“Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (John 8:12)

Jesus said, “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness.” (John 12:46)

“This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:9–12)

“Jesus said to them, ‘The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.’” (John 12:35–36) “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:4–6)

“I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.” (Revelation 21:22–25)

S I N G

Be Thou My Vision #46

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart
Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best thought by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav'n's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for shining in our hearts.

“For God, Who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 4:6)

Thank You for transforming us into children of light.

“At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” (Ephesians 5:8)

Thank You for making us new creatures.

“Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17 ASV)

Thank You for cleansing us from all sin.

“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I exalt Jesus, the true Light of the World.

“Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (John 8:12)

I magnify Jesus, the Everlasting Light.

“The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but [Jehovah] will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.” (Isaiah 60:19)

I extol the Lamb of God.

“The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.... And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 21:23–24; 22:5)

TAKEAWAYS:

STUDY NINE

PREPARE

Jesus the Bread of Life

Jesus, the living bread, was born in Bethlehem which in Hebrew means “house of bread” (*Beth* – house; *Lehem* – bread).

“O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” (Micah 5:2)

“Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.” (Luke 2:4)

“Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ Jesus then said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ They said to Him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.’” (John 6:31–35)

“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.” (John 6:48–51)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.” (John 6:53–55)

“I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:23–24)

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” (1 Corinthians 10:16–17)

S I N G

All the Way My Savior Leads Me, #5

All the way my Savior leads me;
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well;
For I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Savior leads me;
Cheers each winding path I tread,
Gives me grace for every trial,
Feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter,
And my soul athirst may be,
Gushing from the Rock before me,
Lo! a spring of joy I see;
Gushing from the Rock before me,
Lo! a spring of joy I see.

All the way my Savior leads me;
Oh, the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
In my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed immortal,
Wings its flight to realms of day,
This my song thro' endless ages:
Jesus led me all the way;
This my song thro' endless ages:
Jesus led me all the way.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for our daily bread.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matthew 6:11)

Thank You for sending us the Bread of Life so we may live forever.

“I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.” (John 6:48–50)

Thank You for true food.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.’” (John 6:53–55)

Thank You for Your body, which was broken for us.

“As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’” (Matthew 26:26)

Thank You for giving us life in Jesus.

“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” (John 6:57-58)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I bless the Bread of God.

“The Bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”
(John 6:33)

I glorify Jesus as the Bread of Life.

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.’” (John 6:35)

I worship the Living Bread from heaven.

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.” (John 6:51)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus the Way to the Father

God has always faithfully led His people and revealed the way they should go. He led them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

“It is [Yahweh] Who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.” (Deuteronomy 31:8)

“[Yahweh] went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.” The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.” (Exodus 13:21–22)

Jesus leads us out of sin and to the Father. “He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:17–18)

“‘Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.’ Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father.’” (John 14:1–9)

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

“Dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By His death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting Him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19–22 NLT)

S I N G

To God Be the Glory, #39

To God be the glory! Great things He hath done;
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded Himself an atonement for sin,
And opened the Life Gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!
We come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood!
To ev'ry believer the promise of God:
The vilest offender, who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!
We come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!
We come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for revealing the Father to us.

“No one knows Who the Son is except the Father, or Who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” (Luke 10:22)

Thank You for showing us the Father.

“Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

Thank You for teaching us about Your Name.

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

Thank You for opening the new way through Your death.

“Dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By His death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.” (Hebrews 10:19–20 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I praise Jesus: the most excellent Way, the Truth, and the Life.

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the WAY, and the TRUTH, and the LIFE.’ (John 14:6)

I honor You, Jesus for providing access to the Father.

“He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:17-18)

I celebrate You as the Door to the Father.

“I am the DOOR. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” (John 10:9)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus the Good Shepherd

“Jesus again said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.’” (John 10:7–11)

“I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” (John 10:14–16)

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” (John 10:27–30)

“[Yahweh] is my Shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name. 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. 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. Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of [Yahweh] forever.” (Psalm 23:1–6 NLT)

“I Myself will be the shepherd of My sheep, and I Myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord [Jehovah]. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak.” (Ezekiel 34:15–16)

“May the God of peace Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep,” (Hebrews 13:20)

S I N G

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us, #78

Savior, like a shepherd lead us,
Much we need Thy tender care;
In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,
For our use Thy folds prepare:
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are;
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.

We are Thine, do Thou befriend us,
Be the Guardian of our way;
Keep Thy flock, from sin defend us,
Seek us when we go astray:
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
Hear, O hear us when we pray;
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
Hear, O hear us when we pray.

Thou hast promised to receive us,
Poor and sinful though we be;
Thou hast mercy to relieve us,
Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free:
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
Early let us turn to Thee;
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
Early let us turn to Thee.

Early let us seek Thy favor,
Early let us do Thy will:
Blessed Lord and only Savior,
With Thy love our bosoms fill:
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
Thou hast loved us, love us still;
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
Thou hast loved us, love us still.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for being our Shepherd.

“We Your people, the sheep of Your pasture, will give thanks to You forever; from generation to generation we will recount Your praise.” (Psalm 79:13)

Thank You for seeking us when we were lost.

“Thus says the Lord [Jehovah]: Behold, I, I Myself will search for My sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered.” (Ezekiel 34:11–12)

Thank You for caring for us eternally.

“Oh, save Your people and bless Your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.” (Psalm 28:9)

Thank You for laying down Your life for us.

“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” (John 10:11)

Thank You for gathering us in Your arms and carrying us in Your bosom.

“Behold, the Lord [Jehovah] comes with might, and His arm rules for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him. He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms; He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” (Isaiah 40:10–11)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I give glory to the Lamb, Who is the Shepherd.

“The Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”
(Revelation 7:17)

Hallowed be the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”
(1 Peter 2:24–25)

I magnify our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd.

“May the God of peace Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant.” (Hebrews 13:20)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus the Lamb of God

“Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

In the Greek text, Lamb of God may also be translated “God’s Lamb.” “Behold, God’s Lamb, Who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.” (Exodus 12:5–7)

“I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” (Exodus 12:12–13)

“He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on Him the sins of us all. He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet He never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, He did not open His mouth.” (Isaiah 53:5–7 NLT)

“Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’” (Revelation 5:11–13)

S I N G

Just as I Am #41

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God I come, I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot;
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God I come, I come!

Just as I am, tho' tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God I come, I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind;
Yea, all I need in Thee I find,
O Lamb of God I come, I come!

Just as I am, Thou dost receive,
Dost welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God I come, I come!

Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Hath broken every barrier down:
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God I come, I come!

Just as I am, Thy very own:
Made worthy, by Thy blood alone,
To sit beside Thee, share Thy throne,
O Lamb of God I come, I come!

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for being pierced and crushed for our sins.

“He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.” (Isaiah 53:5 NLT)

Thank You, God, for passing over our sin because of Jesus’ sacrifice.

“Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed for us.” (1 Corinthians 5:7 NLT)

Thank You for taking away our sin.

“Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

Thank You for faithfully forgiving and cleansing us from our sin.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I bless You, God's Lamb.

"He saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, God's Lamb, Who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)

I adore You, spotless Lamb of God.

"God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God." (1 Peter 1:18–19 NLT)

I give glory and honor to the Lamb Who was slain.

"Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus the Reconciler

“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” (Colossians 1:17–20 ESV)

The Greek word for “reconcile” is *apokatallassō*. It is formed from *apo-*, “finishing and completion” and *katallassō*, “the exchange of hostility for a friendly relationship, reconcile”- “to reconcile completely.” Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines “reconcile” as: “To call back into union and friendship the affections which have been alienated; to restore to friendship or favor after estrangement.”

“This includes you who were once far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now He has reconciled you to Himself through the death of Christ in His physical body. As a result, He has brought you into His own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault.” (Colossians 1:21–22 NLT)

“God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:8–11)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, Who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake He made Him to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:17–21) See also Ephesians 2:13–18.

S I N G

Jesus Paid It All #63

I hear the Savior say, "Thy strength indeed is small!
Child of weakness, watch and pray, find in Me thine all in all."

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

Lord, now indeed I find Thy pow'r, and Thine alone,
Can change the leper's spots and melt the heart of stone.

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

For nothing good have I whereby Thy grace to claim,
I'll wash my garments white in the blood of Calv'ry's Lamb.

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

When from my dying bed my ransomed soul shall rise,
Then "Jesus paid it all" shall rend the vaulted skies.

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

And when before the throne, I stand in Him complete,
I'll lay my trophies down, all down at Jesus' feet.

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for bringing us to God.

“Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit.” (1 Peter 3:18)

Thank You for reconciling and saving us.

“If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:10)

Thank You for taking our place on the cross and dying for us.

“God made Christ, Who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT)

Thank You for restoring us to our Dad.

“Now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to Him through the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13 NLT)

Thank You for performing Your good work in us.

“He Who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I exalt You, Jesus our Reconciler.

“He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.” (Colossians 1:18–20)

I honor You, Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our Faith.

“Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our Faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.” (Hebrews 12:2) I bless You Christ Jesus, for being our peace.

“Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace.” (Ephesians 5:13–14)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

“I have set [Jehovah] always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:8–11)

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.” (John 11:25)

“I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” (1 Corinthians 15:3–5)

“The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay.’” (Matthew 28:5–6)

“Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I myself. Touch Me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’” (Luke 24:36–39)

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.” (Romans 10:9–10 NLT)

“In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:20–22)

S I N G

He Lives, #61

I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today;
I know that He is living, whatever men may say;
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.

He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

In all the world around me I see His loving care,
And tho' my heart grows weary I never will despair;
I know that He is leading thro' all the stormy blast,
The day of His appearing will come at last.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.

He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!
The hope of all who seek Him, the help of all who find,
None other is so loving, so good and kind.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.

He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for raising Jesus from the dead.

“If the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:11)

Thank You for making us new creations.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Thank You that we know Jesus.

“This is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)

Thank You for giving us new life in Jesus.

“Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

Thank You for eternal life in Jesus.

“God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:11–12)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I give glory to Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life.

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.” (John 11:25)

I bless Your name, Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

“Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom you crucified, Whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:10–12)

I extol You, Jesus, the Living One.

“Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.” (Revelation 1:17–18)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus is Our High Priest

“The Son did not come to help angels; He came to help the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, it was necessary for Him to be made in every respect like us, His brothers and sisters, so that He could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then He could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since He Himself has gone through suffering and testing, He is able to help us when we are being tested.” (Hebrews 2:16–18 NLT)

“Since we have a great High Priest Who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” (Hebrews 4:14–16 NLT)

“Who 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.” (Romans 8:34 NLT)

“Because Jesus lives forever, His priesthood lasts forever. Therefore He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through Him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.” (Hebrews 7:24–25 NLT)

“My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate Who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the One Who is truly righteous. He Himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.” (1 John 2:1–2 NLT)

“Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” (John 14:13–14)

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.” (Philippians 4:6 NLT)

“This is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.” (1 John 5:14–15)

S I N G

The Bleeding Sacrifice, #62

Arise, my soul, arise! Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding Sacrifice on my behalf appears:
Before the throne my Surety stands, before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.

He ever lives above for me to intercede;
His all redeeming love, His precious blood to plead:
His blood atoned for all our race, His blood atoned for all our race,
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

Five bleeding wounds He bears, received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers, they strongly plead for me:
“Forgive him, oh, forgive!” they cry, Forgive him, oh, forgive!” they cry,
“Nor let that ransomed sinner die!”

The Father hears Him pray, His dear Anointed One;
He cannot turn away the presence of His Son:
His Spirit answers to the blood, His Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God.

My God is reconciled, His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child, I can no longer fear:
With confidence I now draw nigh, with confidence I now draw nigh,
and “Father, Abba, Father,” cry.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for saving us completely.

““Because Jesus lives forever, His priesthood lasts forever. Therefore He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through Him.” (Hebrews 7:24–25 NLT)

Thank You for forever praying for us.

“He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.” (Hebrews 7:25 NLT)

Thank You for understanding us.

“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin.” (Hebrews 4:15 NLT)

Thank You for helping us when we need it most.

“Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” (Hebrews 4:16 NLT)

Thank You for atoning for all of our sins.

“He Himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.” (1 John 2:2 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Hallowed be Jesus, our great High Priest.

“Since we have a great High Priest Who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses.” (Hebrews 4:14–15 NLT)

I magnify Jesus, the truly righteous advocate.

“If anyone does sin, we have an advocate Who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the One Who is truly righteous. He Himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.” (1 John 2:1–2 NLT)

I adore Christ Jesus, the one mediator.

“There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5)

TAKEAWAYS:

STUDY SIXTEEN

P R E P A R E

Jesus is the Prince of Peace

“To us a child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of [Jehovah] of Hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 9:6–7)

“A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. And He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” (Mark 4:37, 39)

“For He Himself is our peace.” (Ephesians 2:14)

“You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me One who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

He shall stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of [Jehovah], in the majesty of the name of [Jehovah] His God. And they shall dwell secure, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth. And He shall be their peace.” (Micah 5:2, 4–5)

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6–7 NLT)

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. 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. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of Peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:8–9 NLT)

“May [Jehovah] bless you and protect you. May [Jehovah] smile on you and be gracious to you. May [Jehovah] show you His favor and give you His peace.” (Numbers 6:24–26)

S I N G

Be Still, My Soul #20

Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.

Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly, Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul; thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.

Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.

Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul, though dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in the vale of tears;
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe thy sorrows and thy fears.

Be still, my soul; thy Jesus can repay
From His own fulness all He takes away.

Be still, my soul; the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for making peace through Your cross.

“He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.” (Colossians 1:18–20)

Thank You for Your peace.

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (John 14:27)

Thank You for peace in Jesus.

I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Thank You for peace with God.

“Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

Thank you for perfect peace.

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You.” (Isaiah 26:3)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I praise Jesus, the God of love and peace.

“Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11 NLT)

I glorify Jesus, the Lord of peace.

“May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times in every way.” (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

Holy, holy, holy is Jesus, the God of peace.

“May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He Who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, Messiah

Christos is translated Messiah 6 times in the New American Standard Bible, but in the New Living Translation, it is rendered Messiah 90 times.

“Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, Who is called the Messiah.” (Matthew 1:16 NLT) “One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus.” (John 1:41–42)

“The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’” (John 4:25–26)

The word for Messiah is based on the Hebrew word *mashach*, which means: anointing, consecrated portion, anointing oil. Webster defines consecrate as to make or declare to be sacred, by certain ceremonies or rites; to set apart, dedicate, or devote, to the service and worship of God.

In 1 Kings 19: 15–16 we see God commissioning Elijah to set apart kings and his successor. “Jehovah said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.

Two Hebrew words appear together in Daniel 9:25 we see, *masiach*-Messiah, and nagid-leader/ruler/prince. “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.” (NASB)

Paul was helped to reveal the Messiah. “As was Paul’s custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people. He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, ‘This Jesus I’m telling you about is the Messiah.’” Acts 17:2-3, NLT)

S I N G

Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee, #34

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see
And in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the mem'ry find
A sweeter sound than Thy blest Name,
O Savior of mankind.

O hope of ev'ry contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall how kind Thou art!
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah, this
Nor tongue nor pen can show;
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be Thou our glory now
And through eternity.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for revealing the true Messiah to us.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zechariah 9:9)

Thank You for setting apart and sending Your Son

“As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.” (John 17:18-19)

Thank You for Anointing Jesus for Your service.

“The Spirit of the Lord [Jehovah] is upon me, because [Jehovah] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit.” (Isaiah 61:1, 3)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I bless You Jesus the Consecrated High Priest

“Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” (Hebrews 4:14)

Hallowed be the Anointed One

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon Me.” (Isaiah 61:1 NLT)

I praise You Messiah!

“I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’” (John 4:25–26)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega

“Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty.’” (Revelation 1:5–8)

“The Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across His chest. His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And His eyes were like flames of fire. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and His voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. He held seven stars in His right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from His mouth. And His face was like the sun in all its brilliance. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid his right hand on me and said, ‘Don’t be afraid! I am the first and the last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.’” (Revelation 1:13–18)

“The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” (Deuteronomy 33:27)

“Listen to Me, O family of Jacob, Israel My chosen one! I alone am God, the First and the Last. It was My hand that laid the foundations of the earth, My right hand that spread out the heavens above. When I call out the stars, they all appear in order.” (Isaiah 48:12–13)

“Lord, through all the generations You have been our home! Before the mountains were born, before You gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, You are God.” (Psalm 90:1–2 NLT)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” (Revelation 22:13)

S I N G

How Great Thou Art, #90

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power thru-out the universe displayed!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When thru the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for never changing.

“I am [Yahweh], and I do not change.” (Malachi 3:6 NLT)

Thank You for always being the same.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

Thank You for holding all things together.

“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:17) Thank You for being our home.

“Lord, through all the generations You have been our home!” (Psalm 90:1 NLT)

Thank You for your everlasting arms to catch us when we fall.

“The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” (Deuteronomy 33:27)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I celebrate Jesus, the Alpha and Omega.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”
(Revelation 22:13)

Worthy is Jesus, the first and the last.

“Thus says [Jehovah], the King of Israel and his Redeemer, [Jehovah] of hosts: ‘I AM the first and I AM the last; besides Me there is no god.’” (Isaiah 44:6)

I honor and praise You for defeating death.

“Don’t be afraid! I am the first and the last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.”
(Revelation 1:13–18)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, Faithful & True

When someone is faithful, they are firm, they remain true, they are constant in their allegiance, and they steadfastly and resolutely adhere to the truth. God is faithful, and God is true. He can be counted on. He is worthy of our trust. He is trustworthy.

“Know therefore that [Jehovah] your God is God, the faithful God Who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

“I entrust my spirit into Your hand. Rescue me, [Jehovah], for You are a faithful God.” (Psalm 31:5 NLT)

“Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise.” (Hebrews 10:23 NLT)

“God’s way is perfect. All [Jehovah’s] promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to Him for protection.” (2 Samuel 22:31 NLT)

“God will do this, for He is faithful to do what He says.” (1 Corinthians 1:9 NLT)

“This I declare about [Jehovah]: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I trust Him.” (Psalm 91:2 NLT)

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

“Christ is faithful over God’s house as a Son.” (Hebrews 3:6)

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

“I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The One sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God.” (Revelation 19:11–13) “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24)

S I N G

Victory Through Grace #11

Conquering now and still to conquer, rideth a King in His might!
Leading the host of all the faithful into the midst of the fight;
See them with courage advancing, clad in their brilliant array,
Shouting the name of their Leader, hear them exultingly say:

Not to the strong is the battle, not to the swift is the race,
Yet to the true and the faithful vict'ry is promised through grace.

Conquering now and still to conquer, who is this wonderful King?
Whence are the armies which He leadeth, while of His glory they sing?

He is our Lord and Redeemer, Savior and Monarch divine;
They are the stars that forever bright in His kingdom shall shine.

Not to the strong is the battle, not to the swift is the race,
Yet to the true and the faithful vict'ry is promised through grace.

Conquering now and still to conquer, Jesus, Thou Ruler of all!

Thrones and their scepters all shall perish,

Crowns and their splendor shall fall,

Yet shall the armies Thou leadest, faithful and true to the last,
Find in Thy mansions eternal Rest, when their warfare is past.

Not to the strong is the battle, not to the swift is the race,
Yet to the true and the faithful vict'ry is promised through grace.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for Your Word.

Jesus said: "I have given them Your Word." (John 17:14)

Thank You that all of Your promises are true.

"God's way is perfect. All [Jehovah's] promises prove true." (Psalm 18:30 NLT)

Thank You, God, for being faithful to Your words and works.

"[Jehovah] is faithful in all His words and kind in all His works." (Psalm 145:13)

Thank You for guarding us against the evil one.

"The Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one."
(2 Thessalonians 3:3)

Thank you for watching over Your Word and fulfilling it to the letter.

"[Jehovah] said to [Jeremiah], 'You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.'" (Jeremiah 1:12)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I glorify Jesus, the Faithful Witness.

“Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.” (Revelation 1:5)

I bless Jesus, the True Son of God.

“We know that the Son of God has come, and He has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and He is eternal life.” (1 John 5:20 NLT)

I declare that Jesus is the Living God and the Everlasting King.

“The LORD is the only True God. He is the Living God and the Everlasting King!” (Jeremiah 10:10 NLT)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, the Man of Sorrows

“He grew up before Him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as One from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:2–5)

“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled. And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept.” (John 11:33–35)

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.” (Isaiah 63:9)

“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in Your book.” (Psalm 56:8 NLT)

“[Jehovah] upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.” (Psalm 145:14)

“Cast your burden on [Jehovah], and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm 55:22)

“Blessed be the Lord, Who daily bears our burden, the God Who is our salvation.” (Psalm 68:19 NASB)

“When He went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick.” (Matthew 14:14)

“[The prodigal son] arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

“As a father shows compassion to his children, so [Jehovah] shows compassion to those who fear Him.” (Psalm 103:13)

S I N G

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded, #94

O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down;
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown;
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss 'til now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

What thou, my Lord, hast suffered,
Was all for sinners' gain:
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
Vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

What language shall I borrow
To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this, Thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever;
And should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never
Outlive my love to Thee.

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I extol our compassionate and merciful Lord.

“The Lord is compassionate and merciful.” (James 5:11)

I worship God, our refuge and strength.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)

I adore You, Man of Sorrows.

“He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as One from Whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. (Isaiah 53:3)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords

“On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”
(Revelation 19:16)

“Therefore, God elevated Him to the place of highest honor and gave Him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9–11 NLT)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” (Colossians 1:15–19)

Thank God that He has given us wisdom and spiritual discernment through His Word. We now know that our King is all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful, and He alone is able to work all things together for our good.

“We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.” (Romans 8:28–30)

Since God is sovereign, we can give thanks in all circumstances. “Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:20)

“He Who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Whom no one has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.” (1 Timothy 6:15–16)

S I N G

O Worship the King, #4

O worship the King, all glorious above,
And gratefully sing His wonderful love:
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of days,
Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

O tell of His might! O sing of His grace!
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.

Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail;
Thy Mercies how tender! How firm to the end,
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!

O measureless Might! ineffable Love!
While angels delight to hymn Thee above;
The humbler creation with inspired lays!
And true adoration shall speak forth Thy praise.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for Your omnipotence.

“I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.”
(Job 42:2)

Thank You for sitting as King.

“[Jehovah] sits enthroned over the flood; [Jehovah] sits enthroned as King forever.”
(Psalm 29:10)

Thank You for reigning.

“[Jehovah] reigns; He is robed in majesty; [Jehovah] is robed; He has put on strength as His belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.” (Psalm 93:1)

Thank You for ruling well.

“[Jehovah] has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.” (Psalm 103:19)

Thank You for being our everlasting King.

“Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.” (Psalm 145:13)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I magnify the blessed and only Sovereign King of kings.

“He Who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Whom no one has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.” (1 Timothy 6:15–16)

I celebrate Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

“On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Revelation 19:16)

I give glory to Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords.

“Therefore, God elevated Him to the place of highest honor and gave Him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9–11 NLT)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, Our Rock and Cornerstone

“‘I will stand before you on the rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the Rock, and water will come gushing out. Then the people will be able to drink.’ So Moses struck the rock as he was told, and water gushed out as the elders looked on.” (Exodus 17:6 NLT)

“All of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that traveled with them, and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:4 NLT)

“No one is holy like [Yahweh]! There is no one besides You; there is no Rock like our God.” (1 Samuel 2:2 NLT)

“The Scriptures say, ‘I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in Him will never be disgraced.’ Yes, you who trust Him recognize the honor God has given Him. But for those who reject Him, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.’ (1 Peter 2:6–7 NLT) “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in [Yahweh] forever, for [Yah Yahweh] is an everlasting rock.” (Isaiah 26:3–4)

“You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” (Ephesians 2:19–21)

“David spoke to [Yahweh] the words of this song on the day when [Yahweh] delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said, ‘[Yahweh] is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. I call upon [Yahweh], Who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.’ (2 Samuel 22:1–4)

“I will proclaim the name of [Yahweh]; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.” (Deuteronomy 32:3–4)

S I N G

The Solid Rock, #36

(I MODIFIED THE CHORUS TO FOCUS ON THE ROCK AND NOT THE SAND.)

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
On Christ the solid Rock I stand.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
On Christ the solid Rock I stand.

His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
On Christ the solid Rock I stand.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O, may I then in Him be found,
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.
On Christ, the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
On Christ the solid Rock I stand.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for being our rock.

“[Yahweh] 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. He is my refuge, my savior, the One Who saves me from violence.” (2 Samuel 22:2–3 NLT)

Thank You for being our fortress.

“He alone is my Rock and my Salvation, my Fortress where I will not be shaken. My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my Refuge, a Rock where no enemy can reach me.” (Psalm 62:6–7 NLT)

Thank You for being the cornerstone of our faith.

“The Scriptures say, ‘I am placing a Cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in Him will never be disgraced.’ Yes, you who trust Him recognize the honor God has given Him. But for those who reject Him, ‘The Stone that the builders rejected has now become the Cornerstone.’” (1 Peter 2:6–7 NLT)

Thank You for being our eternal Rock.

“Trust in [Yahweh] always, for [Yah Yahweh] is the eternal Rock.” (Isaiah 26:4 NLT)

Thank You for never changing.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Hallelujah to Christ, our Rock.

“All of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that traveled with them, and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:4 NLT)

I declare God is the perfect Rock.

“He is the Rock; His deeds are perfect. Everything He does is just and fair. He is a faithful God Who does no wrong; how just and upright He is!”

(Deuteronomy 32:4 NLT)

Worthy is Christ, our Cornerstone.

“We are His house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the Cornerstone is Christ Jesus Himself.” (Ephesians 2:20 NLT)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, Teacher and Rabbi

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.” (Psalm 32:8)

“Never forget the day when you stood before [Yahweh] your God at Mount Sinai, where He told me, ‘Summon the people before Me, and I will personally instruct them. Then they will learn to fear Me as long as they live, and they will teach their children to fear Me also.’” (Deuteronomy 4:10 NLT)

“People from many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of [Yahweh], to the house of Jacob’s God. There He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths.’ For [Yahweh’s] teaching will go out from Zion; His Word will go out from Jerusalem.” (Micah 4:2 NLT)

“All your children shall be taught by [Yahweh], and great shall be the peace of your children.” (Isaiah 54:13) “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.” (Hebrews 1:1–2) “You are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.” (Matthew 23:8–10)

“Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘You are blessed, Simon son of John, because My Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.’” (Matthew 16:16–17 NLT)

“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come.” (John 16:13) “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:29–30)

“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to His teaching.” (Luke 10:38–39)

S I N G

Sitting at the Feet of Jesus, #80

Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
O what words I hear Him say!
Happy place so near, so precious!
May it find me there each day!
Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
I would look upon the past;
For His love has been so gracious
It has won my heart at last.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
Where can mortal be more blest?
There I lay my sins and sorrows,
And, when weary, find sweet rest.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
There I love to weep and pray,
While I from His fullness gather
Grace and comfort ev'ry day.

Bless me, O my Savior, bless me,
As I sit low at Thy feet!
O look down in love upon me,
Let me see Thy face so sweet!
Give me, Lord, the mind of Jesus,
Make me holy as He is;
May I prove I've been with Jesus,
Who is all my righteousness.

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I worship our Rabbi from God.

“‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” (John 3:2–3)

Hosanna to our exalted Teacher

“Behold, God is exalted in His power; Who is a teacher like Him?” (Job 36:22)

I praise our Teacher and Lord.

“You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:13–14)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, Creator

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:1–3)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:15–17)

“In these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed the heir of all things, through Whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.” (Hebrews 1:2–3)

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” (Hebrews 11:3)

“Thus says [Jehovah], your Redeemer, Who formed you from the womb: ‘I am [Jehovah], Who made all things, Who alone stretched out the heavens, Who spread out the earth by Myself.’” (Isaiah 44:24)

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him.” (John 1:9–10)

“For us there is one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things and through Whom we exist.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

S I N G

Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty, #76

Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;
join me in glad adoration!

Praise ye the Lord, Who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise ye the Lord, Who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
if with His love He befriend thee.

Praise ye the Lord, Who with marvelous wisdom hath made thee,
Decked thee with health, and with loving hand guided and stayed thee;
How oft in grief hath not He brought thee relief,
spreading His wings for to shade thee!

Praise ye the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the Amen sound from His people again:
Gladly for aye we adore Him.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for creating us in Your image.

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

Thank You for making us new creations.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Thank You for giving us life.

“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” (Job 33:4)

Thank You that we belong to You.

“Know that [Jehovah], He is God! It is He Who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” (Psalm 100:3)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heaven and earth.

“You are [Jehovah], You alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and You preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships You.” (Nehemiah 9:6)

I glorify the Everlasting God.

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? [Jehovah] is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; His understanding is unsearchable.” (Isaiah 40:28)

I magnify our Great God.

“There is one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things and through Whom we exist.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

Amen, You are Worthy.

“Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

One God

“Hear, O Israel: [Yahweh] our God, [Yahweh] is one. You shall love [Yahweh] your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4–5)

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.” (Hebrews 1:3)

“All will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father Who sent Him.” (John 5:23 NASB)

“He who sees Me sees the One Who sent Me.” (John 12:45 NASB)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” (John 1:14)

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me.” (John 17:20–23)

“There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all.” (1 Timothy 2:5–6)

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4–6)

“For us there is one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things and through Whom we exist.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

“[Yahweh] will be king over all the earth. On that day [Yahweh] will be one and His name one.” (Zechariah 14:9)

S I N G

O for a Thousand Tongues, #31

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace.

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honors of Thy name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease,
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life and health and peace.

He breaks the pow'r of canceled sin,
He sets the pris'ner free,
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.

He speaks, and, list'ning to His voice,
New life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb;
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Savior come;
And leap, ye lame, for joy.

Glory to God and praise and love
Be ever, ever giv'n
By saints below and saints above,
The Church in earth and heav'n.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You, Jesus, for showing us the Father.

“He who sees Me sees the One Who sent Me.” (John 12:45 NASB)

Thank You for being our God, our Father, and our Lord

“There is one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things and through Whom we exist.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

Thank You for being one.

“I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.” (John 14:10)

Thank You for one certain way to the Father.

“Jesus said to him, ‘I AM the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” (John 14:6)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I extol You as King over all the earth!

“[Jehovah] will be king over all the earth. On that day [Jehovah] will be one and His name one.” (Zechariah 14:9)

I give glory to the Great I Am.

“Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?’” God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:13–14)

I Praise You Jesus, the one mediator between God and men.

“There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” (1 Timothy 2:5–6)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God, Our Father

“One God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:6)

“Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in His holy habitation.” (Psalm 68:5)

“No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws Him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me— not that anyone has seen the Father except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.” (John 6:44–46)

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:25–30)

“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” (John 15:9–10)

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.’” (John 14:6–7)

“Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?’” (John 14:8–10)

“Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’” (John 20:17)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:3)

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17)

S I N G

This is My Father's World, #99

This is my Father's world,
And to my list'ning ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world!
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas
His hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world
The birds their carols raise;
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world!
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass
He speaks to me ev'rywhere.

This is my Father's world
O let me ne'er forget
That tho the wrong seems oft so strong
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world!
The battle is not done;
Jesus Who died shall be satisfied,
And earth and heav'n be one.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for being a Father to those who need You most.

“Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in His holy habitation.”
(Psalm 68:5)

Thank You for adopting us into Your family.

“Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:6)

Thank You for being our Father.

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” (1 John 3:1)

Thank You for being our Everlasting Father.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6 ASV)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Hallowed be the Father of Lights.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17)

Hallelujah to God our Father.

“There is one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

Blessed be God, the Father of Mercies.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:3)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Fairest Lord Jesus

In Isaiah 53:2, we discover that Jesus the Messiah does not seem to be physically desirable: “He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him.”

Yet Jesus was fair and lovely: “His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” (Song of Solomon 5:16 KJV)

We have a few images of Jesus from those who had the incredible privilege to see Him with their eyes. These writers did their best to describe Him to us. John, the beloved disciple who knew Jesus intimately when He walked the hills of Galilee and strode the streets of Jerusalem, was overcome when Jesus appeared to him in Revelation 1:12–18:

“Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around His chest. The hairs of His head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’”

At the Transfiguration, three disciples saw Jesus in a new light: “After six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.” (Matthew 17:1–2)

One day we shall also see Jesus as He is: “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:1–2)

S I N G

Fairest Lord Jesus, #87

Fairest Lord Jesus! Ruler of all nature!

O Thou of God and man the Son!

Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,

Thou my soul's glory, joy, and crown!

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,

Robed in the blooming garb of spring:

Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,

Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,

And all the twinkling starry host;

Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer,

Than all the angels heav'n can boast.

Beautiful Savior! Lord of the nations!

Son of God and Son of Man!

Glory and honor, praise, adoration

Now and forevermore be Thine!

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for being Altogether Lovely.

“He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” (Song of Solomon 5:16 KJV)

Thank You for being radiant.

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.” (Hebrews 1:3)

Thank You that we shall see You and be changed into Your image.

“We know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I praise You, Bright and Morning Star.

“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star.”
(Revelation 22:16 KJV)

I honor You as the Living One.

“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’”
(Revelation 1:17–18)

I glorify Your great goodness and beauty.

“How great is His goodness, and how great His beauty!” (Zechariah 9:17)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jesus, Our Redeemer

“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and [Jehovah] your God redeemed you.” (Deuteronomy 15:15)

“Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be His people, making for Yourself a name for great and awesome things, in driving out nations before Your people whom You redeemed from Egypt?” (1 Chronicles 17:21)

“Thus says [Jehovah], He Who created you, O Jacob, He Who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine.’” (Isaiah 43:1)

“Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant; I formed you; you are My servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me. I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to Me, for I have redeemed you.” (Isaiah 44:21–22)

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people.” (Luke 1:68)

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.” (Galatians 4:4–6)

“In Him we have redemption through His blood.” (Ephesians 1:7)

“The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:11–14)

“Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:18–19 ASV)

S I N G

Redeemed, #77

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed thro' His infinite mercy,
His child, and forever, I am.

Redeemed, redeemed,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb:
Redeemed; redeemed,
His child, and forever, I am.

Redeemed and so happy in Jesus,
No language my rapture can tell;
I know that the light of His presence
With me doth continually dwell.

Redeemed, redeemed,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb:
Redeemed; redeemed,
His child, and forever, I am.

I think of my blessed Redeemer,
I think of Him all the day long;
I sing, for I cannot be silent;
His love is the theme of my song.

Redeemed, redeemed,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb:
Redeemed; redeemed,
His child, and forever, I am.

I know I shall see in His beauty
The King in Whose law I delight;
Who lovingly guardeth my footsteps
And giveth me songs in the night.

Redeemed, redeemed,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb:
Redeemed; redeemed,
His child, and forever, I am.

G I V E T H A N K S U N T O H I M

Thank You for redeeming us and carrying us.

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.” (Isaiah 63:9)

Thank You for visiting and redeeming Your people.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people.” (Luke 1:68)

Thank You for taking our place and dying for us.

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” (Galatians 3:13)

Thank You for making us free.

“If the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” (John 8:36 NLT)

I’m grateful to know You as my Redeemer.

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19:25)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

REDEEMER

I bless the Holy One of Israel, our Redeemer.

“Your Maker is your husband, [Jehovah] of hosts is His name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth He is called.” (Isaiah 54:5)

I exalt God, our Rock and Redeemer.

“They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their Redeemer.” (Psalm 78:35)

I bless God, Who makes all things.

“Thus says [Jehovah], Your Redeemer, Who formed you from the womb: ‘I am [Jehovah], Who made all things, Who alone stretched out the heavens, Who spread out the earth by Myself.’” (Isaiah 44:24)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God, Our Refuge and Fortress

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)

“In You, O [Jehovah], do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame! In Your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline Your ear to me, and save me! Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come; You have given the command to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress. Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man. For You, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O [Jehovah], from my youth. Upon You I have leaned from before my birth; You are He Who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of You.” (Psalm 71:1–6)

“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to [Jehovah], ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in Whom I trust.’ For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.” (Psalm 91:1–7)

“In you, O [Jehovah], do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in Your righteousness deliver me! Incline Your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! For You are my rock and my fortress; and for Your name’s sake You lead me and guide me; You take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for You are my refuge. Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O [Jehovah], faithful God.” (Psalm 31:1–5)

“Blessed be [Jehovah], my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; He is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and He in whom I take refuge” (Psalm 144:1–2)

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.” (Psalm 62:5–8)

S I N G

A Mighty Fortress, #25

A mighty fortress is our God, A stronghold never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, And armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth is His name, From age to age the same;
And He must win the battle.

And tho' this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God has willed His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim, We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, For lo! his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours, Through Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also;
The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for protecting us.

“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. For You bless the godly, O [Jehovah]; You surround them with Your shield of love.” (Psalm 5:11–12 NLT)

Thank You for being our fortress.

“He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me. O my people, trust in Him at all times. Pour out your heart to Him, for God is our refuge.” (Psalm 62:6–8 NLT)

Thank You for letting us hide under Your wings.

“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.” (Psalm 57:1 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I worship You, my Shield and my Savior.

“He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety. He is my refuge, my Savior, the One Who saves me from violence.” (2 Samuel 22:3 NLT)

Praise God, our Shield and Strong Refuge.

“This God—His way is perfect; the word of [Jehovah] proves true; He is a shield for all those who take refuge in Him. For Who is God, but [Jehovah]? And Who is a rock, except our God? This God is my strong refuge.” (2 Samuel 22:31–33)

Hosanna to God, the Deliverer and Stronghold.

“[Jehovah] is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in Whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” (Psalm 18:2)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Zealous God

“Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of [Jehovah] of hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 9:7)

ZEAL FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD

“Zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.” (Psalm 69:9)

“The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And He poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And He told those who sold the pigeons, ‘Take these things away; do not make My Father’s house a house of trade.’ His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house will consume Me.’” (John 2:13–17)

ZEAL FOR THE WILL OF GOD

“I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him Who sent Me.” (John 6:38)

“When Christ came into the world, He said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body have You prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God, as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.’” (Hebrews 10:5–7)

“‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.’ And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22:42–44)

S I N G

Take My Life, and Let it Be, #96

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love,
At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King,
Always, only, for my King.

Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages for Thee,
Take my silver and my gold—
Not a mite would I withhold,
Not a mite would I withhold.

Take my love my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee,
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Take my will and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for Your zeal for Your Father.

“I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. Yet I do not seek My own glory; there is One Who seeks it, and He is the judge.” (John 8:49–50)

Thank You for Your zeal for God the Spirit.

“Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.” (Luke 12:10)

Thank You for Your zeal for the truth.

“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.” (Matthew 5:17–18 NLT)

Thank You for Your commitment Your own people.

“When Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” (John 13:1)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I magnify You, Mighty God.

“[Jehovah] goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war He stirs up His zeal; He cries out, He shouts aloud, He shows Himself mighty against His foes.” (Isaiah 42:13)

Glory to God, the Zealous Warrior.

“Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. [Jehovah] saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then His own arm brought Him salvation, and His righteousness upheld Him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped Himself in zeal as a cloak.” (Isaiah 59:15–17)

I glorify You, Faithful and True Lord of lords and King of kings.

“I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The One sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Revelation 19:11–16)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

The Great I AM

“I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain. Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they ask me, “What is His name?” what shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM who I AM.’ And He said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: “I AM has sent me to you.”’ God also said to Moses, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: “[Jehovah], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” This is My name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.’” (Exodus 3:12–15)

“So you shall keep My commandments and do them: I am [Jehovah]. And you shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am [Jehovah] who sanctifies you, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am [Jehovah].” (Leviticus 22:31–33)

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’” (John 8:58)

“Thus says [Jehovah], the King of Israel and His Redeemer, [Jehovah] of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides Me there is no god.” (Isaiah 44:6)

“Thus says [Jehovah], Your Redeemer, Who formed you from the womb: ‘I AM [Jehovah], Who made all things, Who alone stretched out the heavens, Who spread out the earth by Myself.’” (Isaiah 44:24)

“Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am He; I am the first, and I am the last. My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together.” (Isaiah 48:12–13)

“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I AM the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’” (Revelation 1:17–18)

S I N G

And Can it Be that I Should Gain, #67

And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.
Amazing love! how can it be,
That Thou, my God, should die for me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.
Amazing love! how can it be,
That Thou, my God, should die for me!

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.
Amazing love! how can it be,
That Thou, my God, should die for me!

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You that we can turn to You to be saved.

“There is no other god besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides Me. ‘Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.’” (Isaiah 45:21–22)

Thank You for creating us O King.

“I am [Jehovah], your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.” (Isaiah 43:15)

Thank You for being our God and Savior.

“I am [Jehovah] your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” (Isaiah 43:3)

Thank You for being our King and Redeemer.

“Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides Me there is no God.” (Isaiah 44:6 ASV)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Hosanna to the Bread of Life from heaven.

“I AM the Bread of Life, and the living bread that came down from heaven.”
(John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)

I glorify the Light of the World.

“I AM the Light of the World.” (John 8:12)

I praise the Resurrection and the Life.

“I AM the Resurrection and the Life.” (John 11:25)

I testify that You are the True Vine.

“I AM the True Vine.” (John 15:1, 5)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God is Merciful and Gracious

It is a privilege to know God by His personal name and not merely by His title. Jehovah or Yahweh is appropriate when addressing God in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament. The name Jehovah or Yahweh is used 6,886 times in the Bible.

“Then [Yahweh] came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and He called out His own name, Yahweh. [Yahweh] passed in front of Moses, calling out, ‘Yahweh! [Yahweh]! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected— even children in the third and fourth generations.’ Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped.” (Exodus 34:5–8 NLT)

In most translations whenever you see LORD in all capital letters, this represents the personal name of God, which I am changing to Jehovah throughout this book. “[Jehovah] passed before him and proclaimed, ‘[Jehovah], [Jehovah], a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.’” (Exodus 34:6 ESV)

“Jehovah is gracious, and merciful; Slow to anger, and of great lovingkindness. Jehovah is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works.” (Psalm 145:8–9 ASV)

“Bless [Jehovah], O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. He made known His ways unto Moses, His doings unto the children of Israel. [Jehovah] is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness.” (Psalm 103:1, 7–8)

God is full of mercy, hence the word “merciful.” He is also a God of grace, or “gracious.” Between the Webster’s 1828 Dictionary and the Thesaurus, we have several synonyms to help expand our grasp of the meaning of these words and understand more about the nature of our God. Gracious—favorable, kind, benevolent, merciful, charitable. Merciful—having or exercising mercy; compassionate, tender, forgiving.

S I N G

Amazing Grace, #53

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Thru many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for shining upon us and being gracious to us.

“[Jehovah] bless you and keep you; [Jehovah] make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; [Jehovah] lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24–26)

Thank You for not turning Your face from us.

“[Jehovah] your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away His face from you, if you return to Him.” (2 Chronicles 30:9)

We are grateful that we can find refuge and mercy under Your wings.

“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in You my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.” (Psalm 57:1)

Thank You for being rich in mercy.

“God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead.” (Ephesians 2:4–5 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I bless the name of Jehovah.

“[God] said, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you My name ‘[Jehovah].’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” (Exodus 33:19)

I honor You, righteous and merciful God.

“Gracious is [Jehovah], and righteous; our God is merciful.” (Psalm 116:5)

I declare that that You are a gracious and merciful God.

“In Your great mercy, You did not destroy them completely or abandon them forever. What a gracious and merciful God You are!” (Nehemiah 9:31 NLT)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God Abounds in Steadfast, Unfailing Love

“[Yahweh] passed in front of Moses, calling out, ‘Yahweh! [Yahweh]! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.’” (Exodus 34:6 NLT)

God’s affection and care for us is: Resolute, Unswerving, Unwavering, Changeless, Constant, Dependable, Enduring, Established, Firm, Fixed, Immovable, Inexorable, Never-Failing, Persevering, Reliable, Stable, and Sure.

Nehemiah, Joel, and Jonah affirmed the same name and description of God which He revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai.

“They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that You performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But You are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them.” (Nehemiah 9:17)

“‘Rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to [Jehovah] your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents over disaster.” (Joel 2:13)

‘O [Jehovah], is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.’” (Jonah 4:2)

Remember your mercy, O [Jehovah], and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O [Jehovah]!” (Psalm 25:6–7)

“Your steadfast love is great to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the clouds.” (Psalm 57:10)

“[Jehovah] is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.” (Psalm 100:5)

“The earth, O [Jehovah], is full of Your steadfast love.” (Psalm 119:64)

“I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love Me and obey My commands.” (Deuteronomy 5:10 NLT)

“Satisfy us each morning with Your unfailing love, so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives.” (Psalm 90:14 NLT)

S I N G

Loved with Everlasting Love, #66

Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know;
Spirit breathing from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so.
O this full and perfect peace!
O this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.

Heav'n above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in ev'ry hue
Christless eyes have never seen.
Birds with gladder songs o'er flow,
Flow'rs with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His and He is mine.

Things that once were wild alarms
Cannot now disturb my rest;
Closed in everlasting arms,
Pillowed on the loving breast.
O to lie forever here,
Doubt and care and self resign,
While He whispers in my ear:
I am His and He is mine.

His forever, only His;
Who the Lord and me shall part?
Ah, with what a rest of bliss
Christ can fill the loving heart!
Heav'n and earth may fade and flee,
Firstborn light in gloom decline;
But while God and I shall be,
I am His and He is mine.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You that Your love endures forever.

“Give thanks to the God of gods, for His steadfast love endures forever.”
(Psalm 136:2)

Thank You for affectionately caring for Your people.

“Blessed be God, because He has not rejected my prayer or removed His steadfast love from me!” (Psalm 66:20)

Thank You for forgiving our sins.

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.” (Psalm 51:1)

Thank You for a fresh batch of Your faithful love each morning.

“The faithful love of [Yahweh] never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each morning.” (Lamentations 3:22–23 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Hallelujah!

“I will extol you, my God and King, and bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You and praise Your name forever and ever. Great is [Jehovah], and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.” (Psalm 145:1–3)

Glory!!

“O [Jehovah], God of Israel, there is no God like You, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart.” (2 Chronicles 6:14)

I agree that You are Jehovah Who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

“Thus says [Jehovah]: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am [Jehovah] Who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares [Jehovah].’” (Jeremiah 9:23–24)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God is Slow to Anger, Patient, and Long-Suffering

David joins with other men and women of God in professing that God is not only merciful, gracious, and abounding in steadfast love, but He is also slow to anger.

“[Jehovah] is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. [Jehovah] is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made” (Psalm 145:8–9)

“[Jehovah] is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; He does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.” (Psalm 103:8–10 NLT)

Some translations use the words patient and long-suffering to describe God. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9 ASV)

GOD HAD PERFECT PATIENCE WITH PAUL.

“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life.” (1 Timothy 1:15–16)

GOD IS PATIENTLY LOOKING FOR REPENTANCE.

“Do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4)

“That is why [Jehovah] says, ‘Turn to Me now, while there is time. Give Me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don’t tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.’ Return to [Jehovah] your God, for He is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish.” (Joel 2:12–13 NLT)

S I N G

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, #22

Come, thou Fount of ev'ry blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the mount – I'm fixed upon it
Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Here I raise mine Ebenezer
Hither by Thy help I'm come;
And I hope by Thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wand'ring from the fold of God;
He to rescue me from danger
Interposed His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness like a fetter
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee;
Prone to follow* Lord, I feel it
Prone to *serve the God I love;
Here's my heart O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

*I changed the last verse to say 'follow' and 'serve' instead of 'wander' and 'leave.'

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for Your kindness, which leads us to repentance.

“Don’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?” (Romans 2:4 NLT)

Thank You for being patient so we have time to turn from our sin.

“The Lord isn’t really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.” (2 Peter 3:9 NLT)

Thank You for the great patience You showed to Paul, which encourages each of us.

“This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’—and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of His great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in Him and receive eternal life.” (1 Timothy 1:15–16 NLT)

Thank You for being slow to anger and just.

“[Jehovah] is slow to get angry, but His power is great, and He never lets the guilty go unpunished.” (Nahum 1:3 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I praise You for Your patience.

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ.”
(2 Thessalonians 3:5 ASV)

Amen, bless His holy name!

“Bless [Jehovah], O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His Holy name!”
(Psalm 103:1)

With my whole heart I affirm that ...

“You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and rich in unfailing love.” (Nehemiah 9:17 NLT)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God is Spirit

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

“I can never escape from Your Spirit! I can never get away from Your presence! If I go up to heaven, You are there; if I go down to the grave, You are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there Your hand will guide me, and Your strength will support me.” (Psalm 139:7–10 NLT)

“These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:10–12)

“Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’” (Matthew 28:18–19)

“After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on Him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is My dearly loved Son, Who brings Me great joy.” (Matthew 3:16–17 NLT)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Gregory of Nazianzus said of the Trinity, “No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the splendour of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Three than I am carried back into the One. When I think of any of the Three, I think of Him as the Whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that One so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.” (Orations 40, 41)

S I N G

Immortal, Invisible, #49

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light;
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains high soaring above,
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
To all life Thou givest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish but nought changest Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for inhabiting the heavens and the earth.

“Am I a God Who is only close at hand?’ says [Yahweh]. ‘No, I am far away at the same time. Can anyone hide from Me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?’ says [Yahweh].” (Jeremiah 23:23–24 NLT)

Thank You for being near us.

“He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet He is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In Him we live and move and have our being.’” (Acts 17:26–28)

Thank You for renewing and upholding us by Your Spirit.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” (Psalm 51:10–12)

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for Your power.

“Then he said to me, “This is what [Yahweh] says to Zerubbabel: It is not by force nor by strength, but by My Spirit, says [Yahweh] of Heaven’s Armies.” (Zechariah 4:6 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Yes God!

"I will proclaim the name of the [Yahweh]; ascribe greatness to our God!"
(Deuteronomy 32:3)

Hallelujah!

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17)

I worship You, God, Who is spirit.

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
(John 4:24)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

The Spirit is God

The Spirit leads us into truth, convicts us of sin, pours the love of God in our hearts, points us to Jesus, helps us pray, and gives us a second birth.

“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” (John 16:13)

“This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the One who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.” (1 John 5:6)

“No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20–21)

“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” (John 16:7–8)

“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5)

“When the Helper comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me.” (John 15:26)

“Praying at all times in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 6:18)

“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.” (Romans 8:26 NLT)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:5–8)

S I N G

The Comforter has Come, #82

Oh, spread the tidings round; wherever man is found,
Wherever human hearts and human woes abound;
Let ev'ry Christian tongue proclaim the joyful sound:
The Comforter has come!

[Refrain]

The Comforter has come, the Comforter has come!
The Holy Ghost from heav'n, the Father's promise giv'n;
Oh, spread the tidings round, wherever man is found –
The Comforter has come!

The long, long night is past, the morning breaks at last;
And hushed the dreadful wail and fury of the blast,
As o'er the golden hills the day advances fast!
The Comforter has come! [Refrain]

Lo, the great King of kings, with healing in His wings,
To ev'ry captive soul a full deliv'rance brings;
And thro' the vacant cells the song of triumph rings:
The Comforter has come! [Refrain]

Oh, boundless love divine! How shall this tongue of mine
To wond'ring mortals tell the matchless grace divine
That I, a child of hell, should in His image shine!
The Comforter has come! [Refrain]

Sing, till the echoes fly above the vaulted sky,
And all the saints above to all below reply,
In strains of endless love the song that ne'er will die:
The Comforter has come! [Refrain]

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for giving us life in our mortal bodies.

“If the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:11)

Thank You for communicating to us that we are adopted Sons of God

“All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by Whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” (Romans 8:14–16)

Thank You for enabling us to say Jesus is Lord!

“No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Thank You for inspiring men to write the Word of God.

“No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20–21)

Thank You for guiding us into truth.

“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” (John 16:13)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I honor the Eternal Spirit.

“How much more will the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (Hebrews 9:14)

I bless the Spirit of Holiness.

“Declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,” (Romans 1:4)

I exalt the Spirit of Truth.

“When the Helper comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me.” (John 15:26)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God is Good

Truly, only God is good. “Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.’” (Mark 10:18)

Or perhaps you have heard the saying, “God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good.” That is also a biblical sentiment for, “[Jehovah] is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made.” (Psalm 145:9)

“Oh, taste and see that [Jehovah] is good!” (Psalm 34:8)

“[Jehovah] is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.” (Psalm 100:5)

“God saw that it was good.” Some form of this expression is used six times in the first thirty-one verses of the Bible (verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). “God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31)

“Everything created by God is good” (1 Timothy 4:4)

“You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold Your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.” (Nehemiah 9:20)

“When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared.” (Titus 3:4)

“Not one word of all the good promises that [Jehovah] had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.” (Joshua 21:45)

“[Jehovah] your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills.” (Deuteronomy 8:7).

The gospel is Good News. “The Spirit of the Lord [Jehovah] is upon me, because [Jehovah] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.” (Isaiah 61:1)

“[Jehovah] commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear [Jehovah] our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as we are this day.” (Deuteronomy 6:24)

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (Genesis 50:20)

“We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

S I N G

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus, #83

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

Thru death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
Over us sin no more hath dominion
For more than conqu'rors we are!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

His Word shall not fail you He promised;
Believe Him, and all will be well:
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

G I V E T H A N K S

You are good. Thank You.

“Give thanks to [Jehovah], for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.”
(Psalm 136:1)

Thank You for coordinating and orchestrating our lives for good.

“Our great and good God is over all and causes ALL THINGS to work together for our good. “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Thank You for leading us and teaching us.

“Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God! Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground!” (Psalm 143:10)

While we have breath, we rejoice and give thanks for Your goodness.

“Let Your priests, O [Jehovah] God, be clothed with salvation, and let Your saints rejoice in Your goodness.” (2 Chronicles 6:41)

Thank You for revealing the Good News to our hearts.

“The Spirit of the Lord [Jehovah] is upon me, because [Jehovah] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.” (Isaiah 61:1)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

Praise You, good God.

“[God] said [to Moses], ‘I will make all My goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you My name ‘[Jehovah].’” (Exodus 33:19)

I magnify Your goodness.

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” (Acts 10:38)

I testify that you are good and upright.

“Good and upright is [Jehovah].” (Psalm 25:8)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Jehovah of Hosts

This name for God is found 261 times in Scripture. In some translations like the New Living Translation, *Yahweh Sabaoth* is rendered “LORD of Heaven’s Armies.” In others like the New International Version, it is translated “LORD Almighty,” while others like the American Standard Version translate it as “Jehovah of hosts” Each of these descriptions fills out the picture of God as a warrior at the head of heaven’s armies.

The first time “LORD of Hosts” or “Jehovah of hosts” is found in the Bible is in 1 Samuel. “[Hannah] vowed a vow and said, ‘O [Jehovah] of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your servant and remember me and not forget Your servant, but will give to Your servant a son, then I will give him to [Jehovah] all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.’” (1 Samuel 1:11)

“Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of [Jehovah] of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, Whom you have defied.’” (1 Samuel 17:45)

“Who is this King of glory? [Jehovah] of hosts, He is the King of glory!” (Psalm 24:10)

“[Jehovah] of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows Himself holy in righteousness.” (Isaiah 5:16)

“One called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is [Jehovah] of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’” (Isaiah 6:3)

“Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once send Me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53)

“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Revelation 19:11–16)

S I N G

Soldiers of Christ, Arise, #81

Soldiers of Christ, arise
And put your armor on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Thru His eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of hosts
And in His mighty pow'r:
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.

Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued,
And take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God;
That having all things done,
And all your conflicts past,
Ye may o'ercome thru Christ alone
And stand entire at last.

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul;
Take ev'ry virtue, ev'ry grace,
And fortify the whole.
From strength to strength go on,
Wrestle and fight and pray;
Tread all the pow'rs of darkness down
And win the well-fought day..

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for being holy.

“One called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is [Jehovah] of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’” (Isaiah 6:3)

Thank You that You are righteous.

“[Jehovah] of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows Himself holy in righteousness.” (Isaiah 5:16)

Thank You for filling the earth with Your glory.

“One called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is [Jehovah] of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’” (Isaiah 6:3)

Thank You for being our Redeemer.

“Your Maker is your husband, [Jehovah] of hosts is His name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth He is called.” (Isaiah 54:5)

Thank You that we can trust you completely.

“O [Jehovah] of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in You!” (Psalm 84:12)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

All glory to Jehovah, the God of heaven's armies.

"[Jehovah], the God of hosts, [Jehovah] is His memorial name." (Hosea 12:5)

I worship You, Great King.

"I am a great King, says [Jehovah] of hosts, and My name will be feared among the nations." (Malachi 1:14)

Amen! I do praise and exalt You.

"[Jehovah] is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. [Jehovah] is a man of war; [Jehovah] is His name." (Exodus 15:2–3)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God's Lovingkindness

“God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4–7)

My favorite rendering of the Hebrew word “chesed” is “lovingkindness.” I consider it the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament word “grace.” Lovingkindness captures the essence of God’s heart. He is slow to anger, merciful, gracious, and overflowing in lovingkindness and truth. Other words which appear in different versions of the Bible are: “steadfast love,” “unfailing love,” and “mercy.” Here are a few of my favorite passages which express this attribute:

“Jehovah is good; his lovingkindness endureth for ever.” (Psalm 100:5 ASV)

“Give thanks to [Jehovah], for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.” (Psalm 136:1 NASB)

“Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of [Jehovah] forever.” (Psalm 23:6 NASB)

“All the paths of Jehovah are lovingkindness and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.” (Psalm 25:10 ASV)

“Thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, is in the heavens; Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies.” (Psalm 36:5 ASV)

“Satisfy us in the morning with Your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. ” (Psalm 90:14)

“The law was given through Moses, but God’s unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17 NLT)

“He loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of [Jehovah] fills the earth.” (Psalm 33:5 NLT)

“Because Your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live; in Your name I will lift up my hands.” (Psalm 63:3–4)

S I N G

What a Friend We Have in Jesus, #3

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for pursuing me in love.

“Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life.”
(Psalm 23:6 NLT)

Thank You for Your great, steadfast love to us.

“As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.” (Psalm 103:11)

Thank You for teaching us to trust in Your steadfast love.

“I have trusted in Your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.”
(Psalm 13:5)

I am so grateful that Your unfailing love fills the earth.

“He loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of [Yahweh] fills the earth.”
(Psalm 33:5 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I bless You and lift up my hands to You.

“Because Your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live; in Your name I will lift up my hands.” (Psalm 63:3–4)

I extol God our Savior, lovingkindness in the flesh.

(Speaking of Jesus) “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared.” (Titus 3:4)

I praise you Jehovah for your goodness and lovingkindness.

“Give thanks unto Jehovah; for He is good; For His lovingkindness endureth for ever.” (Psalm 136:1 ASV)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God is Faithful

God is faithful in His person and in His promises. God declares to Jeremiah, “I am watching over My Word to perform it.” (Jeremiah 1:12)

“He remembers His covenant forever, the word that He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that He made with Abraham, His sworn promise to Isaac, which He confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.... He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham, His servant.’” (Psalm 105:8–11, 42)

David was promised that one of his descendants would sit on His throne forever. God was watching over these words to fulfill them. “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before Me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Samuel 7:16)

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:31–33)

Jeremiah wept over the demise and destruction of the blessed city of Jerusalem. He had every reason to be discouraged. God’s people were headed to captivity, their leaders had rejected his messages of hope for the nation, and he was persecuted for standing by God. Yet, meditating on God’s steadfast love and faithfulness gave him hope.

“He has filled me with bitterness; He has sated me with wormwood. He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, ‘My endurance has perished; so has my hope from [Jehovah].’ Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of [Jehovah] never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘[Jehovah] is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in Him.’” (Lamentations 3:15–24)

S I N G

Great is Thy Faithfulness #89

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father!
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not:
as Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You that You are faithful, just, and upright.

“The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Thank You for Your immense faithfulness.

“Your steadfast love, O [Jehovah], extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the clouds.” (Psalm 36:5)

Thank You for Your eternal faithfulness.

“Great is His steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of [Jehovah] endures forever. Praise [Jehovah]!” (Psalm 117:2)

Thank You that You are faithful.

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Thank You for remaining faithful, according to Your eternal nature.

“If we are unfaithful, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Who He is.” (2 Timothy 2:13 NLT)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I praise You, covenant-keeping God.

“Know therefore that [Jehovah] your God is God, the faithful God Who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those Who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

I honor You, faithful God.

“Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O [Jehovah], faithful God.” (Psalm 31:5)

I magnify You, merciful God.

“Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” (Hebrews 2:17) I affirm that You are faithful and kind.

“[Jehovah] is faithful in all His words and kind in all His works.” (Psalm 145:13)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

God Never Changes

“I am [Jehovah], and I do not change.” (Malachi 3:6 NLT)

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with Whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17)

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

“‘You are My witnesses,’ declares [Jehovah], ‘and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after Me.’” (Isaiah 43:10)

“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all My purpose.’” (Isaiah 46:9–10)

“Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but You are the same, and Your years have no end.” (Psalm 102:25–27)

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:15–17)

“The counsel of [Jehovah] stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.” (Psalm 33:11)

“You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God; for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever.’” (1 Peter 1:23–25)

S I N G

Yesterday, Today, Forever, #74

Oh, how sweet the glorious message simple faith may claim:

Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same!

Still He loves to save the sinful, heal the sick and lame,
Cheer the mourner, calm the tempest; glory to His name!

Refrain: Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same;

All may change, but Jesus never! Glory to His name!

Glory to His name; Glory to His name,

All may change, but Jesus never! Glory to His name!

He Who was the friend of sinners seeks thee, lost one, now;

Sinner, come, and at His footstool penitently bow:

He Who said, "I'll not condemn thee, go and sin no more,"

Speaks to thee that word of pardon, as in days of yore. *Refrain*

He that pardoned erring Peter never need'st thou fear;

He that came to faithless Thomas all thy doubt will clear:

He Who let the loved disciple on His bosom rest,

Bids thee still, with love so tender, lean upon His breast. *Refrain*

Oft on earth He healed the suff'rer by His mighty hand;

Still our sicknesses and sorrows go at His command:

He Who gave His healing virtue to a woman's touch,

To the faith that claims His fullness, still will give as much. *Refrain*

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for being the same forever.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

Thank God for Your eternal Word.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)

Thank You for being.

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’” (Exodus 3:14) Thank You for never changing.

“I [Yahweh] do not change.” (Malachi 3:6)

Thank You for remaining.

“Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but You are the same, and Your years have no end.” (Psalm 102:25–27)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I exalt the Alpha and Omega.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”
(Revelation 22:13)

I bless the great I AM!

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’” (John 8:58)

I worship God alone.

“Thus says [Jehovah], the King of Israel and His Redeemer, [Jehovah] of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides Me there is no god.’” (Isaiah 44:6)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

The Name of Jesus

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.” (Luke 1:30–31)

“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9–11)

“Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.” (Hebrews 13:15)

“I will extol you, my God and King, and bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You and praise Your name forever and ever. Great is [Jehovah], and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.” (Psalm 145:1–3)

“Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’” (Acts 3:6)

“Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom you crucified, Whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the Stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the Cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:10–12)

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13)

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

“Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’” (Matthew 28:18–19)

S I N G

All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name, #45

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all;

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,

Ye ransomed from the fall,

Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,

And crown Him Lord of all;

Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Let ev'ry kindred, ev'ry tribe,

On this terrestrial ball,

To Him all majesty ascribe,

And crown Him Lord of all;

To Him all majesty ascribe,

And crown Him Lord of all!

O that with yonder sacred throng

We at His feet may fall!

We'll join the everlasting song,

And crown Him Lord of all;

We'll join the everlasting song,

And crown Him Lord of all!

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for new life in the name of Jesus.

“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:31)

Thank You for making us children of God in Jesus’ name.

“To all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12)

Thank You for forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Spirit in the name of Jesus.

“Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ (Acts 2:38)

Thank You for answering our prayers in Jesus’ name.

“Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” (John 14:13–14)

Thank You for being present as we assemble in the name of Jesus.

“Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.” (Matthew 18:20)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I thank You God, and praise Your glorious name.

“Yours, O [Jehovah], is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O [Jehovah], and You are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand are power and might, and in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank You, our God, and praise Your glorious name.” (1 Chronicles 29:11–13)

I confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9–11)

TAKEAWAYS:

P R E P A R E

Immanuel

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14) This prophecy was declared by the prophet Isaiah in approximately 700 B.C. and fulfilled to the letter upon the birth of Jesus.

God was with Abraham

“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (Genesis 28:15)

God was with Moses

“He said, ‘But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.’” (Exodus 3:12)

God was with Joshua

“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5)

God was with the children of Israel in their Exodus from Egypt.

“[Jehovah] went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.” (Exodus 13:21–22)

God was with Sharach, Meschech, and Abednego

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, ‘Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?’ They answered and said to the king, ‘True, O king.’ He answered and said, ‘But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.’” (Daniel 3:24–25)

God is with His People

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5)

“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:20 KJV)

S I N G

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times did'st give the Law,
In cloud, and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

G I V E T H A N K S

Thank You for never leaving us.

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

Thank You for always being with us.

“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:20 KJV)

Thank You for walking with us in the darkest valleys of life.

“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.” (Psalm 23:4 NLT)

Thank You for sending Your Spirit to be with us forever.

Jesus said: “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.” (John 14:16)

IDEAS FOR GRATITUDE:

B L E S S H I S N A M E

I bless You, Immanuel.

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).” (Matthew 1:23)

I worship You for becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14)

I magnify You for being our God.

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.” (Revelation 21:3)

TAKEAWAYS:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Demme and his wife, Sandra, have been married since 1979. They have been blessed with four sons, three lovely daughters-in-law, and two special grandchildren.

Steve has served in full- or part-time pastoral ministry for many years after graduating from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is the creator of Math-U-See and the founder of Building Faith Families.

He produces a monthly newsletter and weekly podcasts. You can follow him on Facebook at facebook.com/stevedemme/

Steve is a regular speaker at home education conferences, men's ministry events, and family retreats.

Building Faith Families

Exists to teach and encourage families to embrace the biblical model for the Christian home. Scripture declares God created the sacred institution of the family. In His wisdom, He designed marriage to be between one man and one woman. We believe healthy, God-fearing families are the basic building block for the church and society.

The family is foundational and transformational. Parents and children become more like Jesus as they lay their lives down for each other, pray for each other, and learn to love each other as God has loved them.

RESOURCES TO ENCOURAGE AND STRENGTHEN YOUR FAMILY

The Monthly Newsletter

- This includes an encouraging exhortation as well as updates on Bible contests and upcoming speaking engagements.

Podcast

- Each week, a new episode is released on our website, iTunes, and our Facebook page. These may be downloaded for free.

Seminars for free download

- For over 30 years, Steve has been speaking and teaching at conferences around the world. Many of his messages are available for your edification.

BUILDINGFAITHFAMILIES.ORG

KNOWING GOD'S LOVE,

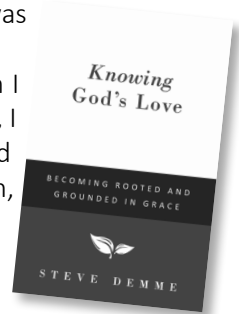
WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US

Comprehending God's unconditional love is the cornerstone for the overarching commands to love God and our neighbor. For we are unable to love until we have first been loved. "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19) and "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us." (1 John 4:10)

The first, or as Jesus called it, the Great Command, is to love God. I began asking God to help me love Him with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength and was wonderfully surprised by how He answered my request.

Instead of awaking one morning with a burning love for God, which I expected, He began to steadily reveal how much He loved me. In 2012, I found myself believing in a new way that God knows me thoroughly and loves me completely. This knowledge that God likes me for who I am, and not based on what I do, has transformed my life.

As I have become more rooted and grounded in grace, my relationship with God is now much richer and deeper. My wife and I are closer than we have ever been. Knowing I am loved and accepted just as I am has freed me to be more transparent and real as I relate with my sons and others.



LOVED TO LOVE

LOVING OTHERS AS JESUS HAS LOVED US

When Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, He responded, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)

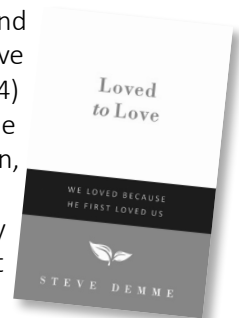
As He was about to be crucified, Jesus washed His disciples' feet and introduced a new revolutionary teaching: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you." (John 13:34)

Jesus was able to love well, for He was well-loved. At His baptism, the heavens opened, and God the Father spoke, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." (Matthew 3:17 NLT)

The more you and I comprehend and assimilate the love of God by His Spirit, the greater our capacity to love God and others, for perfect love flows from God. "We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

As a husband and father, my primary responsibilities are to love God, my wife, and my children. I am writing as a man and sharing how God has led me to begin applying these principles in our home. But these principles are applicable to every believer.

The fruit of loving others as we have been loved will not only bless each of our homes, but our communities as well. "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35).



SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

LESSONS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Most of what I've learned about communication, I acquired in the past few years during transitioning my business to a family owned business. The ability to communicate about difficult topics like business, values, your occupation, and a family's legacy takes effort and training.

As a husband and father, I have the potential to build up and encourage my family like no one else. I also have the ability to tear down and discourage my wife and sons. The Bible teaches effective principles of communication which are timeless.

My relationship with my wife and children has been transformed through godly safe communication. As I continue to grow in grace and the knowledge of God, I am in a better place to have open, transparent, and honest communication. While the skills we have acquired in being a clear speaker and an engaged listener are beneficial, investing time to have a quiet heart is essential. For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

I hope the principles we have learned and applied to such benefit in our own home and business will be a help to you on your journey. May the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, our Rock and our Redeemer. (from Psalm 19:14)



CRISIS TO CHRIST

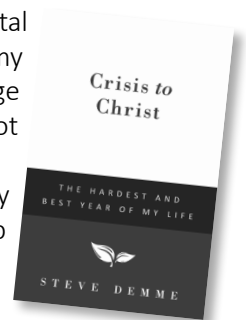
THE HARDEST AND BEST YEAR OF MY LIFE

I have wounds, scars, baggage, and stuff from my past, which I have tried to ignore, but which is always present. In 2012, I was confronted with the distressing knowledge that my own wounds, which I thought were hidden and of no consequence, were wounding my wife and sons. I discovered I cannot hide my toxic issues, for eventually they will leak out and hurt those who are closest to me.

This difficult time, the hardest and best year of my life, was instrumental in changing my life and transforming my relationship with God and my family. On this journey, I experienced pain, which led me to acknowledge my own hurts and get help from the body of Christ to understand root causes of my distress and confront unbiblical thinking.

While I experienced incredible pain, I also discovered that my Heavenly Dad likes me just the way I am. Even though my path went through deep waters, God was with me every step of the way.

My motivation in writing is to affirm others who are going through similar valleys and tribulations. These hard journeys are normal for the Christian. Every person of note in Scripture endured at least one lifechanging crisis. God uses these difficult times to work deep in our hearts, reveal more of Himself, and transform us into the image of His Son.



FAMILY WORSHIP

YOU SHALL TEACH THEM TO YOUR CHILDREN

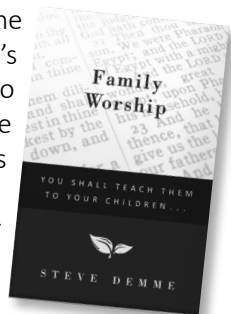
In this readable and encouraging book, Steve shares the ingredients for a doable plan of family worship. After many years of trying and failing, God helped the Demmes make studying God's Word a daily part of their home.

Steve also addresses obstacles which we all face in establishing the discipline of reading God's Word as a family. Be encouraged by Steve's experiences teaching his four sons, and learn from other families who share strategies that have worked for their children. All families are unique and special. May each home find their own style which works best for them.

"It was helpful to see the comments at the end from other families saying what they had done. I know in my heart that God does much more than we can imagine when we even take the smallest steps to disciple our children, but it was good to have some practical examples from you and others. Even just the reading of Scripture allows God's words to take root and his Holy Spirit to minister to us all."

"I loved the book and read it in about a week and a half. My chief take-away was family worship needs to be an important part of family life. Your book had some great examples of how to make it more appealing to the kids."

"My husband had never realized that he needed to give his family his best. He had never considered that we have to love God before we can teach our children His commandments."



HYMNS FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

This time-honored collection of 100 classic hymns will be a rich addition to your family worship. Make a joyful noise to the LORD!

In addition to the music for these carefully selected songs of worship, the history and origin of each hymn enhances the meaning of the lyrics.

There are four CDs with piano accompaniment for singing along in your home, car, or church.

Some of the titles are:

- What a Friend We Have in Jesus
- Holy, Holy, Holy
- It Is Well with My Soul
- To God Be the Glory
- All Hail the Power of Jesus Name
- Amazing Grace
- How Firm a Foundation
- Blessed Assurance
- Christ Arose
- Rise Up, O Men of God
- Jesus Paid It All
- Just As I Am, along with 88 more!



COME INTO HIS PRESENCE

TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD

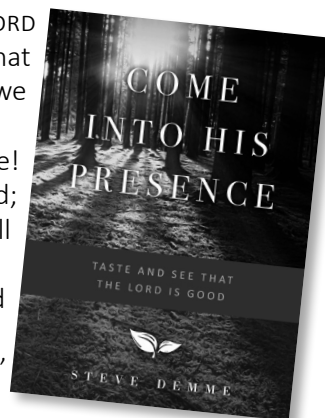
God invites each of us to come into His presence. His “Father heart” has ever yearned to be near His people. This book is about how the good Holy Spirit led Steve to apply the eternal principles found in Psalm 100 and draw near to God through Jesus.

“Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into His presence with singing! Know that the LORD, He is God! It is He Who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name! For the LORD is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.

By applying these inspired Scriptures, Steve has discovered what David meant when he declared, “Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in Him!” (Psalm 34:8 NLT)

Because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, God and His people are being restored to a close relationship with their Heavenly Father. “Look, God’s home is now among His people! He will live with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them.” (Revelation 21:3 NLT)



STEWARDSHIP

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Luke 12:34)

Stewardship is personal finance taught from a biblical perspective, written by the author of the successful Math-U-See curriculum, Steve Demme. With his signature humility, humor, and sharp math skills, Steve combines practical math instruction with biblical principles of finance and discipleship material.

This program is appropriate for anyone with a good understanding of math and beginning algebra. Many parents have commented they wish they had this class when they were a young adult.

The second edition is updated with current topics relevant to young people aged 15-17, who are beginning to explore more independent financial opportunities and responsibilities. Here is a sampling of the thirty-six topics

Consumer Math Topics

- Banking & Checking
- Budgeting & Credit Cards
- Cost of Owning a Vehicle
- Understanding Mortgages
- Insurance and Bearing Burdens
- Cost of Post Secondary Education
- Entrepreneur
- Christian Micro-Finance
- Compound Interest and Investing

Once the heart is connected to our treasure, it is essential to nurture our heart from God’s inspired Word. In each of the thirty-six lessons, there is devotional material called Biblical Principles and Scripture Studies. These focus on Biblical principles of finance as well as Scripture studies on basic discipleship. Here is a sampling.

Biblical Principles to Govern Our Treasure

- The Love of Money
- Trusting God and Being Content
- Honor the Lord with Your Wealth
- Giving from a Redeemed Heart
- The Poor, Widows and Orphans
- The Blessing of God
- Scripture Studies to Instruct Our Heart
- Loving God and Belonging to God
- Conviction Versus Condemnation
- The First Commandment with a Promise
- David, a Man After God’s Heart
- The Ministry and Work of the Spirit
- Jesus, the Suffering Servant Our Identity in Jesus

The Student Workbook has thirty-six lessons which are organized into a weekly format, with five worksheets per lesson. There are ten questions per lesson. Seven problems are from consumer math topics, two are from the Biblical Principles and Scripture Studies, and one is written to facilitate family discussion.

