

APRIL 2022

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



Seeing **JESUS**
in the **PASSOVER**

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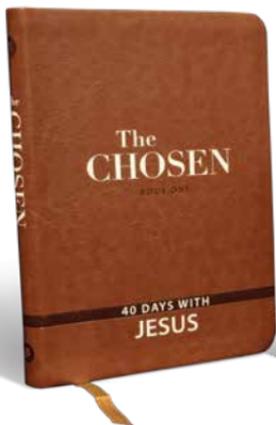


PAGE 52

Seeing Jesus in the Passover



The promise of the Messiah is our hope and strength. David's article on **page 5** unveils the promises of Passover that can change your life!



Our THANK YOU GIFTS for your partnership!

(See page 28 for details.)

EDITOR'S CORNER



April brings so many blessings – trees budding, birds singing, flowers bursting forth – and more daylight to enjoy it all. Every blessing streams from the overflowing love God has for you and me! Let Passover and Resurrection Sunday be your April highlights, your chance to celebrate the greatest gift of God, His Son, Jesus.

Our magazine this month is all about seeing and sharing Jesus! Everything changes when Jesus appears on the scene – our failures turn into victories, darkness becomes light. Our unchanging, all-powerful God still works miracles, and you'll find evidence of them inside this issue .

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Get the inside scoop on the viewer-funded, blockbuster show *The Chosen* in this exclusive interview with the show's creator, Dallas Jenkins.

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You may know Jesus Christ offers eternal security, but have you invited Him into your failures and heartaches as Your Redeemer?

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By Ben Cerullo

What if Christians really believed that our Lord wants us to have joy and victory? Ben calls believers to armor up and war against the world and the devil.



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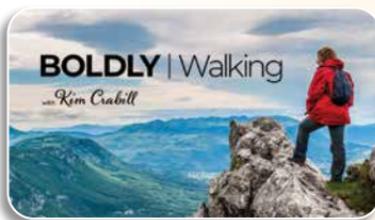
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Don't Miss His Blessings!

*The LORD is my strength and my song;
He has given me victory. – Exodus 15:2*

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Seeing Jesus in the **Passover**



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

I'm often amazed to meet Christians who have little interest in observing the Feast of Passover. I share with them three critical reasons every believer should care about, and celebrate, this special event on God's calendar:

- Passover foreshadows the fulfillment of the long-awaited promise of the coming Messiah.
- God commanded His people (this includes us today) to celebrate it forever.
- Celebrating Passover and following God's instructions provides access to specific covenant promises the Lord wants to release in your life.

Too often, Christians focus their study of the Bible in the New Testament and completely overlook the Old Testament. However, Paul tells us all the things that happened to the children of Israel happened as an example to us, "*written for our admonition*" (1 Corinthians 10:6-11).

One such example is the amazing story of God delivering the children of Israel from Egypt. Passover had great meaning and purpose to them thousands of years ago, and it still has great meaning and purpose for us today!

Placing the blood on the doorposts of their home would symbolize the blood of Jesus that covers our hearts and saves us from eternal death.

When Moses demanded Pharaoh let the Israelites go, Pharaoh gave a resounding “no” (Exodus 5). God displayed His ultimate hand of deliverance in the 10 plagues He sent on the people and land of Egypt. As the final plague, the death angel killed all the firstborn people and animals of Egypt.

The 10 plagues weren’t just a random number. Why 10? Because the Egyptians worshiped 10 primary gods. Jehovah, the only living and true God, was making a statement: “I am God, and there is none other besides Me. In My hand are might and power, and none can withstand Me! I am greater than all the false, impersonating gods you worship.”

God used the blood of a lamb to deliver His children from 400 years of slavery in Egypt. The specific instruction God gave them to place the blood of an unblemished lamb on the doorposts of their houses had more significance than they could have ever imagined.

Choosing a perfect lamb spoke of the sinless life of Jesus, who would one day lay down His life as the atonement for the sins of the world. Placing the blood on the doorposts of their home would symbolize the blood of Jesus that covers our hearts and saves us from eternal death.

PASSOVER AND THE LAST SUPPER

God commanded the celebration of Passover “*throughout your generations*” (Exodus 12:14). He called it an “*everlasting ordinance*” (Exodus 12:17). In other words, He wanted His people to do this *forever*.

This wasn’t just an instruction to the Israelites. Its guidelines are for ALL who are called by His name. When Jesus and His disciples partook of the last supper, they were celebrating Passover. So much symbolism surrounded this meal.

As Jesus broke the unleavened bread, He reminded them that *He* was the Bread who came down from Heaven. His was the body that would be broken for them. When He took the cup of wine (there are four in a Passover Seder), Jesus specifically picked up the THIRD cup, the cup of REDEMPTION. When He took this cup, He made a powerful statement, saying “I AM your redemption.”

For hundreds of years, the Israelites had been keeping their appointed time with God. He called it a holy convocation, which means a rehearsal. For all these years, they had no idea what they were rehearsing, but this was it...the coming of God’s only Son to lay down His life as a ransom for their sins.

Look at the words of John the Baptist when he saw Jesus coming to be baptized by him, “Behold! *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29).

Jesus, the unblemished Lamb of God, was slain the day after the last supper, sometime around twilight the next day. His blood brought forgiveness and redemption, covering the heart of every believer – not only protecting us from death but giving us eternal life.

There are many symbolic things found in the Passover celebration or Seder service. One is the *afikomen* – a piece of broken bread that has been scored and pierced. It is wrapped in a napkin and hidden away (as was the body of Jesus) to be found (by children) and brought back to the table.

Again, this is much more than just a metaphor. God was painting a picture of what was to come. Jesus, God’s Son, would be broken for us, pierced, crucified, buried, and resurrected. God was showing His people in advance what would happen. As such, Passover was a holy convocation...a *rehearsal* of what was to come.

There are many symbolic things found in the Passover celebration or Seder service.



Although they didn't realize it at the time, they were rehearsing the death and resurrection of the Messiah. God wanted them to practice it...rehearse it...and tell it to their children throughout the generations, so when it happened, they would recognize what they were rehearsing and recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

At the very first Passover, the Israelites were to kill a lamb, roast it, eat it, and do so with their sandals on their feet, their staves in their hands, and their traveling clothes on – ready to leave Egypt!

The lamb was to be their deliverance out of Egypt and the source of their strength as they left. The Bible says they left in haste. They didn't have time to prepare other food. The lamb would be their nourishment.

My friend, the blood of Jesus is the very thing that covers our sins. It's the body of Jesus that gives us strength and nourishment to leave our Egypt (bondage to the world). Have you applied His blood to the doorposts of *your* heart today?

FIVE GREAT PROMISES

God spoke through Moses to the children of Israel in Exodus 6:6-8 and promised them five specific things:

1. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

2. I will deliver you from their bondage.
3. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.
4. I will take you for My own people, and I will be your God.
5. I will bring you to the land I swore to give to your forefathers and give it to you.

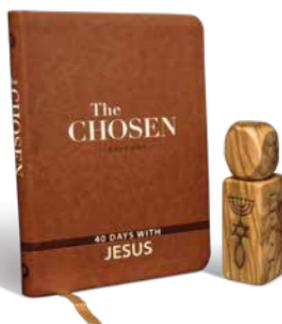
What does that mean for you today? It's Jesus who brings you out from under the burdens of the world's system. It's Jesus who redeems you and delivers you from bondage. It's Jesus who makes you a child of the living God. It's Jesus who has determined a place and a plan for your life.

Why celebrate Passover? Because by doing so, you are keeping one of the Lord's instructions, recognizing all that Jesus has done for you!

God bless you,

David

P.S. Turn to page 28 to see the life-changing THANK YOU GIFTS I want to send you.



You can't take it with you, but you can
PAY IT **FORWARD**

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

– JESUS, Matthew 6:19-21

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Jesus in Primetime



Behind the scenes of *The Chosen* – see how this anointed program is bringing faith to thousands

Movie producers have been using the big screen to tell the story of Jesus since 1902, but a fresh vision for sharing the greatest story ever told has introduced millions to the life-changing power of the King of kings. Launching the idea several years ago, producer and director Dallas Jenkins set out to create a TV show in which viewers could get to know the New Testament cast of characters – including Jesus – personally.

The series quickly became an overwhelming success, and *The Chosen* is now in its third season of taping – well on its way to the goal of seven seasons. Along the way, the show has enjoyed God-sized miracles in funding, casting, writing, and production.

Jenkins recently talked with Inspiration Ministries and explained how the extraordinary financing of the project revealed God's favor right from the start.

“The all-time crowd-funding record was 5.7 million [dollars], and we needed more than that to do this show well. But God had really pressed upon my heart the feeding of the five thousand. I was kind of in this loaves and fishes moment where I thought, ‘All right, it’s not my job to worry about that. I’m just going to bring the loaves and fishes.’”

And just as in the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14), God took care of the rest!

As Jenkins moved forward with

producing the early episodes, people were blown away by the powerful storytelling and humanity of the characters, donating in record numbers to see the first season completed.

“So we ended up shattering the all-time crowd-funding record, raising over ten million dollars from 15,000 investors around the world...It’s been a crazy ride. The feedback we’re getting from people has been huge. It’s been a really overwhelming and exciting journey,” shared Jenkins.

Although the series has been watched by over 50 million people, Jenkins remains grounded in humility when it comes to the show’s success. He remembers coping with the frustrations of failure after experiencing a difficult setback in his career just a few years ago. So he knows trusting God is a never-ending process:

“I was in a position spiritually where I was open to anything. I didn’t really have a certain future...so I said, ‘Lord, I’m just going to be open to what comes.’”

Jenkins used this time of waiting to pour himself into a Christmas video production for his local church. Intent on sharing a fresh look at Jesus’ birth, Jenkins told the story through the eyes of a lowly, despised shepherd. What was supposed to be a short film production ended up going viral online and provided the catalyst that would eventually become *The Chosen* series.

Jenkins said, “There have been movies, and there have been mini-series, but there has never actually been a multi-season video series where you can really dig into the characters and binge-watch it like you would binge-watch any other thing. I thought, ‘What a cool way to tell these stories and really enrich the experience of the life of Christ.’”



“If He needed you to know what it meant, He would have told you. So just be you, okay?” John to Simon Peter





When it came to casting, Jenkins said that God's hand was clear in every part of the process. "All of these actors were surprises. We didn't know any of them. All of them are young. All of them are new – these diamonds in the rough. It was like God wasn't going to make it a difficult decision for us. Each person who was cast for the project was cast within minutes of seeing them."

Throughout production, the significance of telling Jesus' story – and the difficulty of doing it well – has presented unique challenges. The weight of portraying Jesus' humanity while conveying His divinity is felt deeply by both Jenkins and Jonathan Roumie, who was selected to play Jesus.

The first preaching scene so overwhelmed Roumie, in fact, that he went to Jenkins and said, "I need you to know how hard this is for me. I'm struggling to feel worthy." Jenkins replied, "Me too. This is the story of this project. You're not worthy. I'm not worthy. Now, we need to embrace that, trust He chose us for this, and won't let us mess it up."

Today, *The Chosen's* determined, intense effort to walk on the holy ground of Christ's life is changing lives – on set and around the world. As Jenkins shared with us, "It's been truly unbelievable. I've been in the business for twenty years, and I haven't experienced anything like this. We've heard from hundreds of people who have watched all the episodes multiple times."

Testimonies from the web also speak volumes about the show's lasting impact. Comments like, "For the first time, I feel like Jesus wants to be around me." And "Last year I was about to commit suicide, but I watched how Jesus came to Mary Magdalene, and it literally saved my life." Jenkins is quick to

*"My whole world,
everything I
thought I knew...
what if it's wrong?"*

Matthew





“I was one way, and now I am completely different. And the thing that happened in between was Him.”

Mary Magdalene to Nicodemus

emphasize that *The Chosen* is not meant to be a replacement for the Bible. He encourages viewers to let the program be a catalyst for their self-discovery in the Word. However, the team does give great care to be biblically, historically, and culturally accurate. All scripts are reviewed by a Protestant scholar, a Catholic priest, and a Messianic rabbi. The writers then develop authentic personalities for the cast from scriptural accounts and cultural context.

Throughout the series, the writers use creative license to portray the beautiful, complex reality of flawed individuals interacting with Jesus. For example, when Mary falls back into sin and sobs, “I can’t go back to Him. He fixed me once, and I broke again,” we can see ourselves in her place, desperate for healing through His forgiveness.

And that’s where *The Chosen* series excels – tackling the issues of faith by revealing people’s

vulnerabilities. Peter’s candid conversation with Jesus clarifies a common struggle: “We all agree on You, and we have a goal and your instructions. But getting there – sometimes there’s a lot of noise.” As believers, we all experience that noise. But by seeing Jesus walk out the Father’s will through the difficulties of real life, we get a glimpse of God’s desire to love us despite our sins and flaws, to heal us and draw us near.

And that’s the heart of *The Chosen* – to prepare souls to open up to God and receive His supernatural touch. It’s not just a simple message or plotline, but the *experience* of the show itself. The miracles of a man who lived two thousand years ago are just a side story to the real goal of the show’s creators. Their passion is to speak to a new generation about the power of our living Savior – bringing hearts to the Father and transforming lives through His love. ❖



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Pieces of Easter

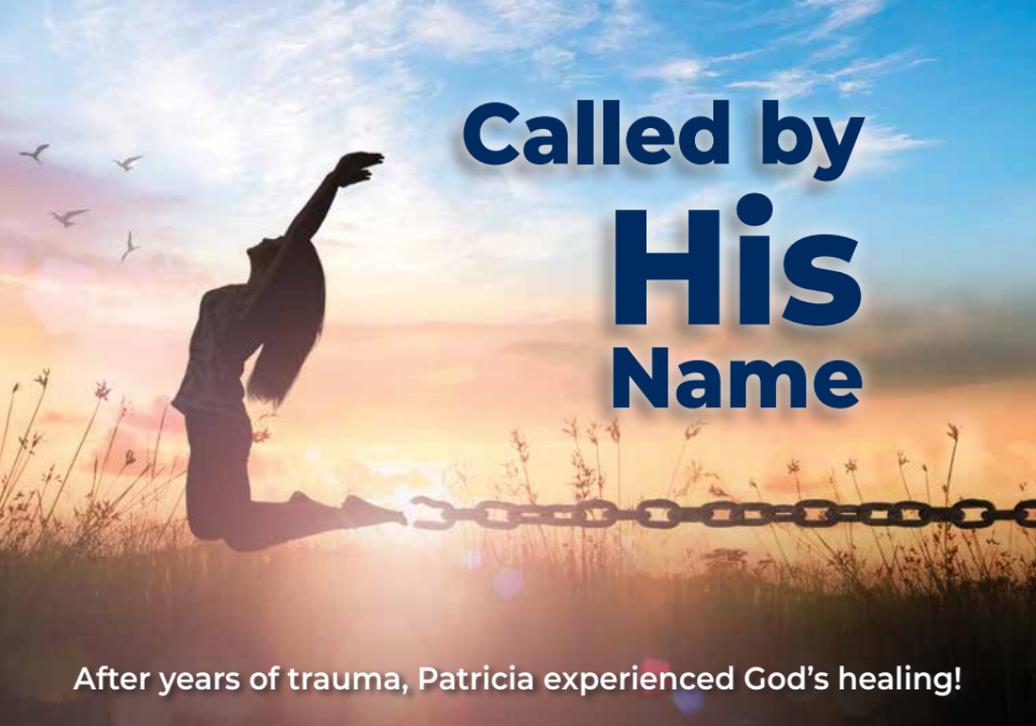
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Called by His Name

After years of trauma, Patricia experienced God's healing!

Born prematurely as a result of a botched abortion, Patricia continued to experience tragedy and trauma as the years passed. She was physically and sexually abused as a child, married to abusive, unfaithful men; raped; and repeatedly forsaken.

After moving to America on a visa, Patricia was unjustly jailed because of her husband's activities. Weary of struggling, she cried out, "If there is a God, what have I done to deserve this?" God answered miraculously.

In Patricia's struggle to survive, she was unaware of how ill she was. Being unfairly jailed opened the door for her to receive critically needed medical care. Sent to the hospital, Patricia dozed in and

out of consciousness. She heard a gentle voice say, "God loves you so much." Suddenly, a comforting, healing presence settled upon her.

While the one who spoke was never identified, that one brief encounter changed her life forever.

Though her physical and emotional damage didn't vanish overnight, over the years, Patricia has experienced the provision of God, the comfort of His friendship, the clear leading of the Spirit, and finally, miraculous healing from trauma-induced seizures! She's discovered she can trust God to sustain her through any trial.

Patricia fortifies her faith through Inspiration TV and prayer. "I do get lonely, and Inspiration TV is an

encouragement to keep doing right.” She also spends time in prayer daily to hear God’s personal words for her. Some years back, God put fellow believers who were backslidden and lost on her heart. “It made me sad, and I began praying about it. God used 2 Chronicles 7:14 to guide my thoughts”:

If my people, which are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

“I asked God what I could do, and He showed me that my need to be encouraged was a need others felt, too. So, I began sharing what lifted my spirit with others – and found it blessed me. In the midst of my suffering, I couldn’t see an end to my pain, but now I can see God’s goodness and help others see it, too.

“Living in the projects is rough, but God put me in the middle of the enemy’s camp on purpose. He’s

given me a love for tough people, and I can care for my fellow tenants. Jesus lives inside of me, and just like Him, I am anointed to bring healing to others (Isaiah 61). I am a vessel for Jesus. I couldn’t have made it without God – He has held my hand every step of the way. I want to give Him all the credit – and help others know Him, too!”

Twenty-five years later, she’s still living all out for the Savior she met that night. “My difficulties have given me a heart for people and helped me know, life’s all about Jesus.”

Recently, Patricia asked God for a way to share His love with more people. He brought to mind something she had seen only once many years before – a cross in a pocket. She began creating them with plastic canvas and yarn and finding people to bless and encourage. She’s now given out over 10,000 crosses to people from all walks of life – including all of us at Inspiration Ministries! We’re thankful and inspired by Patricia’s example of the impact one life can have for the Lord! ❖

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Becoming Fools

TODAY'S READING: ROMANS 1

For many, today is known as April Fool's Day, a day when they will play practical jokes and try to fool others. This custom has no certain origin.

One theory is that April 1 is near the time of year when nature fools us with sudden changes. Others point to the year 1582 when the Gregorian calendar was introduced, and New Year's Day was moved to January 1. (It had been on March 25.) Many refused to change and were called "fools."

While some use this day as an excuse to play pranks, others are foolish in God's sight *all* the time. As the Bible explains, many *claim* to be wise and think they know the answers to life's problems. But to God, they have "*foolish ideas*."

Paul said that the *key* to real wisdom is being willing to become foolish in the sight of the world. This does not mean playing practical jokes but believing God's Word and living according to His timeless promises. Don't believe what is popular or what others think is true. Recognize that "*the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God*" (1 Corinthians 3:19).

Commit to *believe* God's Word and trust Him *unconditionally*. This may not be popular, but absolute faith is a key to receiving His blessings. Seek to serve Him. Believe Him. Seek His wisdom, and live for Him.

FRIDAY

April

1

Ever since the world was created, people have seen...everything God made...they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God... They began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like... Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools.

Romans 1:20-22 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, deliver me from the world's foolishness. Help me trust You and live according to Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on something in God's Word that doesn't make sense to you.

SATURDAY

April

2

I sought the LORD, and He...rescued me from all my fears...the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them.

Psalms 34:4-7 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: _____. Thank You for delivering me from fear. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Fear of the Unknown

TODAY'S READING: PSALM 34

The Portuguese felt it was critical to find a water route to Asia. The problem? Getting past Cape Bojador on the western coast of Africa. The cape's Arabic name was "father of danger." Geographers labeled the waters beyond the cape as the "Green Sea of Darkness."

Sailors were paralyzed by rumors. The cliffs along its coast were said to contain a magnetic force that could sink a vessel. There were stories that ships sailing by the cliffs could be struck with sheets of fire, that the water was boiling, and ships would be burned by the sun and water.

But Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator would not accept excuses. He commissioned a series of voyages to round Cape Bojador. The first 14 voyages failed. But in 1434, Henry made a radical decision, picking a man with no sailing experience to lead the fifteenth voyage. The man was Gil Eanes, a trusted, loyal aide.

Eanes's first voyage failed. But Henry ordered him to try again and do whatever was necessary. As they approached the cape, Eanes convinced the crew to keep sailing. They learned that the rumors were not true. The waters were calm. The barrier had been broken.

David also knew that we are often crippled by fear. But he discovered that God could deliver him from fear and save him from trouble. God can deliver *you* from every fear. In every situation, turn to Him.

How do you react when faced with crippling fear?

Reaping a Harvest

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 8

After the flood, God promised Noah that “seedtime and harvest” would *never* cease. This wasn’t a clever slogan but a perpetual *promise* – a principle *true* for all creation! It was true after the flood and *always* will be true.

We see this principle in operation every day around us. Farmers and gardeners know they cannot reap a harvest unless they plant seeds. And the kind of seeds they plant determines what kind of harvest they will receive and whether they will reap a little or a lot.

This principle applies to *every* aspect of life. If we want to reap a harvest, we *first* must plant seeds. It’s also true for finances, relationships, and even spiritual blessings. We must let go of our seeds and plant them in the ground. We must give if we want to receive (Luke 6:38).

Ask God to show you how seedtime and harvest apply to you. Think about the harvests you want to receive and the seeds in your hands. Then start sowing. If you want to receive more love, sow more love. If you want more blessings, bless others. If you want more financial resources, give more to God’s Kingdom.

If you *cling* to your seeds, you cannot expect to reap a harvest. You need to plant your seeds. Let them go and then watch them grow! The more you plant, the greater the harvest!

SUNDAY

April

3

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.

Genesis 8:22 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I will plant with the resources You have given me. Thank You for the harvest You have promised. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What resources has God given you that you can sow into His Kingdom?

MONDAY

April

4

*Out of the depths I have
cried to You, O LORD;
LORD, hear my voice! Let
Your ears be attentive
to the voice of my
supplications.*

Psalm 130:1-2 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these
issues to You: _____.
Thank You that I can
depend on You. In
Jesus' name, amen.

From The Depths

TODAY'S READING: PSALM 130

Psalm 130 was a favorite of Martin Luther. It inspired him to write "Out of the Depths I Cry to You," a hymn so important to him that it was sung at his funeral.

In his hymn, Luther admitted that he had made mistakes, but through his struggles, he focused on God. He prayed that God would listen and not regard his sin. He knew God was merciful and "full of grace." He hoped in God and Him alone, knowing it was foolish to trust "in our own merit." Confident in God, Luther waited for Him, knowing that He "sends redemption through the Word."

This psalm has been *meaningful* to many who felt they were in "*the depths*" and didn't seem to have anywhere to turn.

Faced with overwhelming problems, the psalmist knew he needed God. He didn't pray a short, shallow prayer but a prayer of *desperation*, pleading with God to hear his voice. He placed *everything* in God's hands and confessed that he trusted in Him. He had faith and was confident in His Word.

Do you ever feel you are in the depths of despair or feel a sense of hopelessness and don't know what to do? As the psalmist learned, these are times to turn to the Lord and cry out for His help. Pray with a sense of intensity. Stand on His Word. Trust Him.

Write a prayer from your heart crying to God for His help and grace.

Honest with God

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 1

Regardless of what people think, God knows *everything* about them and you. You might try to hide, but He knows every thought and every action.

To be free, you must be willing to *admit the truth* about your life and stop trying to hide. You must recognize the importance of having a sincere *dialogue* with Him and “*reason together*.” Instead of running away or denying reality, *talk* with Him, be *open* and *honest* about your thoughts and feelings.

We might try to hide from God for many reasons. We may hope He doesn't know our real thoughts and actions. But He wants us to realize that running and hiding don't solve anything. He simply *knows!*

To be free, we need to *confess* our sins to Him, *accept* His forgiveness, be *willing to change*, and be honest with Him. Move forward, obey His Word, and follow His principles.

Seek to be honest with God about *your* life – your thoughts, habits, and emotions. Allow His Spirit to probe your heart and mind. Put aside all excuses, and “*reason together*” with Him. Confess any sins He reveals to you and accept His forgiveness. Be confident that He wants to help you. He wants you to have a heart as “*white as snow*.”

As you face the future, commit yourself to obey His Word. Trust Him to free you of guilt and experience true forgiveness.

Ask God to expose your sins – even secret sins – and ask for forgiveness.

TUESDAY

April

5

Come now, let us reason together...though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.

Isaiah 1:18-19 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart. Reveal any sin. Show me how I can have victory and freedom. I receive Your forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

April

6

*My heart is not haughty,
nor my eyes lofty.
Neither do I concern
myself with great
matters, nor with things
too profound for me.
Surely I have calmed
and quieted my soul... O
Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time forth and
forever.*

Psalms 131:1-3 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. I commit these situations to you: _____ . Thank You for Your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Calm and Quiet Soul

TODAY'S READING: PSALM 131

Facing uncertainty, our minds can become overwhelmed with speculation and worry. Then after an event has taken place, we look back, wondering if we did the right thing.

David learned how to have peace when faced with such problems. He learned the importance of being humble before God and submitting his thoughts, emotions, and actions to Him. If you have made mistakes, confess them. Continue staying clean before Him.

We often find ourselves carrying burdens from the past and being bogged down by worry. The Bible urges us to realize the importance of staying humble before God. Trust Him to give you a calm mind. As we commit our ways to Him, we should recognize that He cares for us and is watching over us.

Responding to moments like these, David said that he *calmed* and *quieted* his soul “like a weaned child” (v. 2). These children can be confident, knowing that their mothers always are near, ready to help.

If you find yourself filled with turmoil and anxiety, start focusing on God. Commit your needs to Him. Declare His promises. And turn over every problem to Him, just as weaned children trust in their mothers. Humble yourself before Him and submit every situation to Him. Then start praising Him and thanking Him for the answer.

Calm and quiet your soul to receive His peace. And place your hope in Him.

Reflect on what you need right now to have a peaceful soul.

Ready for Blessings

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 4

God promised to shelter His people from storms, shade them in the heat of the day, protect them, and help them find refuge. Who would benefit from these blessings? Specifically, those who were *holy* (v. 3), those who trusted in Him, and those whose lives were pleasing to Him.

These people recognized that their conduct had been unacceptable. They knew they needed to get their hearts right with God. As a result, He had “*washed away the filth.*” He had *purged* them from sin and prepared them for blessings.

How had He done this? “*By the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning*” (v. 4). They had gone through a fire that had dealt with their sin. This had been unpleasant, but through this judgment and burning, their deficiencies had been exposed. After God cleansed them, they had been made *clean*. He was ready to lavish blessings on them and supernaturally protect them.

In our time, God stands ready to protect and bless us. But He cannot do so while we tolerate sin, if unclean thoughts poison our minds, if our hearts are impure. For our good, He needs to purge and purify us from anything that pollutes our lives that we might be ready for greater blessings.

Let God *purify* you. Cooperate with Him. Allow Him to refine you until you are cleansed of impurities and ready for the bounty of His blessings.

What in your life needs to be cleansed and purified by God?

THURSDAY

April

7

When the LORD has washed away the filth... over all the glory will be a canopy. And there will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.

Isaiah 4:4-6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Cleanse me from sin. Help me be pure in Your sight. I surrender my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

April

8

He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. . . Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?

Isaiah 5:2, 4 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I submit my life to You. Prune anything that doesn't please You. Thank You for purifying me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Wild Grapes

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 5

God used grapes to provide a picture of His people: what He expected, how they could be more productive. The Hebrew word translated wild grapes is used here for the only time in the Bible. It can mean something worthless, but it also implies the presence of *poison*.

God said He was looking for “good grapes.” Instead, he found useless grapes. Even worse, they could be *poisonous*. Something needed to be done to prevent wild grapes from growing, to encourage the growth of the right kind of grapes, and to eliminate the poison.

Pruning was critical for this development – cutting back what was unnecessary and wasteful. Eliminating whatever kept it from developing its potential was essential. This pruning could be painful, but it was necessary to encourage maximum growth and productivity.

Jesus also described the importance of pruning. The Father prunes every branch even those that bear fruit, “*that it may bear more fruit*” (John 15:2).

As the Bible makes clear, God wants us to be “good grapes,” to bear fruit. This requires *pruning*. We need to be freed from the corruption that can infect us, purified, and examined by the Spirit, so the life of the Spirit can flow through us. Then we can be filled with the Spirit to abide in Him and live by His Word (John 15:4-10).

Cooperate with God. Let Him do whatever pruning He feels necessary. He wants the best for you.

What needs to be pruned from your life, so you can flourish spiritually?

It Starts with God

TODAY'S READING: DEUTERONOMY 6

Born in April 1583 in Delft near the North Sea in the modern-day Netherlands, Hugo Grotius proved to be a gifted writer even when just a boy. Then when he was fifteen, he began studying law. Just a few years later, he was appointed to an official position and increasingly became involved in politics and government. His efforts included defending the free access to the ocean for all nations.

But because of his involvement in religious and political disputes, he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. Three years later hidden in a chest of books, he escaped, fleeing to Paris. While in exile, he wrote his legal masterpiece *On the Law of Prize and Booty*. Profoundly influential even today, this document provided the foundation of international law.

For Grotius, the law *began* with a belief in God and the Bible. He wrote, "Whatever God has shown to be his will, that is law." No one could rule a kingdom, city, or a family (or even oneself), without reason, and no one can be ruled by reason unless "ruled by God, and (wholly) be obedient to Him."

Today, many people seek to remove God from political life and the legal process. But as Huge Grotius knew, if we want to be successful, we need to live according to God's Word.

Be sure you base your life on the Bible. Learn God's principles and live by them. Don't compromise.

SATURDAY

April

9

Now Israel, you should listen and be careful to do them, so that it may go well for you and that you may increase greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

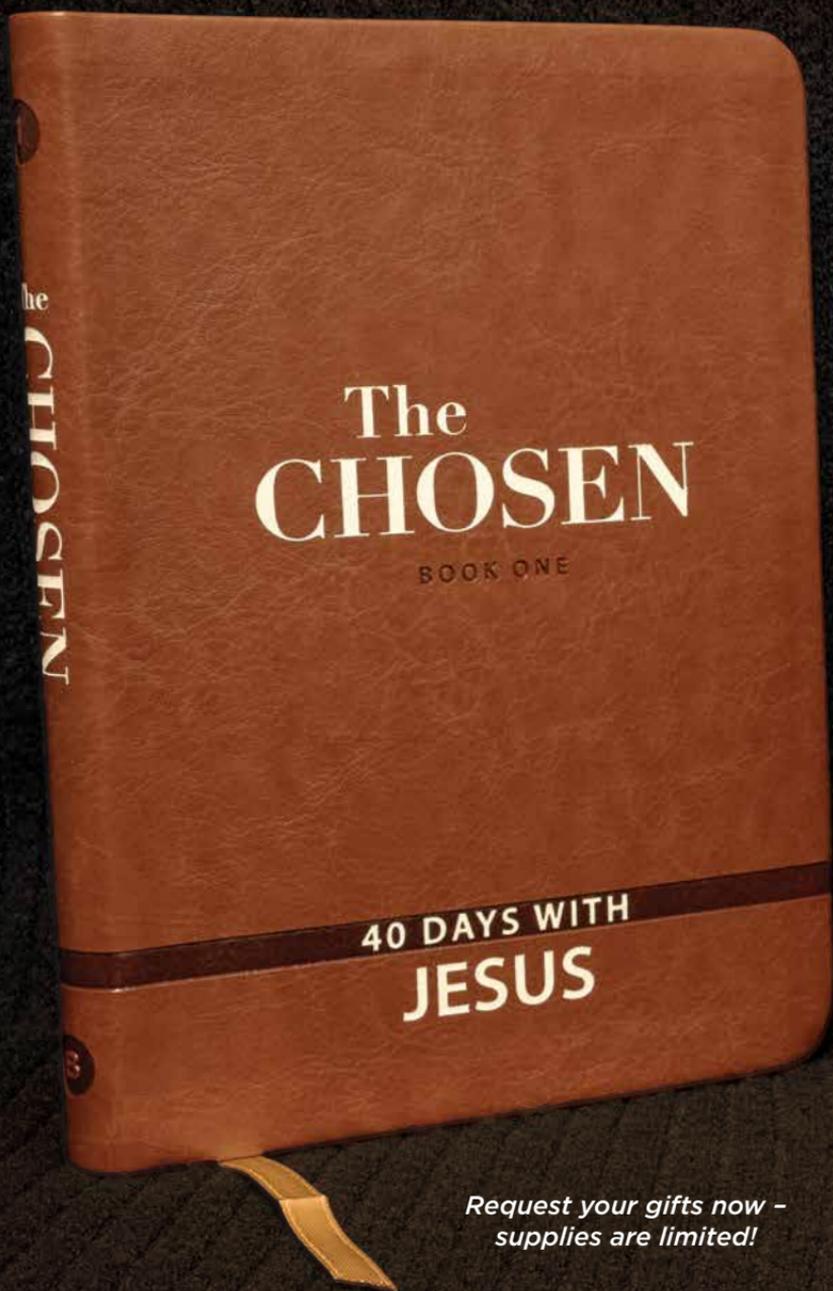
Deuteronomy 6:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your Word. Help me to put it into practice. Bring about a return to righteousness. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you ensure that you're keeping God's laws?

See Jesus through the



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SUNDAY

April

10

They took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord." [...] There were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship. [...] "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

John 12:13, 20-21 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for being my example. I commit my life to You. I delight to serve You. In Your name, amen.

Jesus' Perspective

TODAY'S READING: JOHN 12

The crowds were eager to see Jesus and shout His praises! Having raised Lazarus from the dead, He was entering Jerusalem in a moment of triumph, a time when many were celebrating. But Jesus had a *unique perspective*. He understood what really was taking place and what was important.

During the festivities, He was approached by some Greeks who had their own ideas about what Jesus represented. But Jesus did not sound like a conqueror or king. He did not speak about power or glory. Instead, He spoke about being a *servant*. Instead of talking about life, He talked about *death* (vs. 24-26).

Jesus' message was simple: He had committed to do the will of the Father and complete His work even if it meant death. If these Greeks wanted to bear much fruit, they, too, needed to commit *everything* to serve God. They needed to obey Him without reservation, no matter the cost. They, too, needed to be servants and realize that God rewards those who seek first His kingdom.

Palm Sunday reminds us of the importance of praising Jesus. But it also reminds us of the importance of committing everything to follow Him. We are not to worry about popularity but are to seek first the Kingdom of God and be a servant.

Focus on serving Jesus. Let praise and worship fill your lips. And make your life a living sacrifice, pleasing to Him.

How can you focus on being a sacrificial servant for Jesus?

Send Me

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 6

When Isaiah had a personal revelation of God, his life changed. He could no longer look at the world the same way. He had seen God sitting on a throne and witnessed the angels declaring, “*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of armies. The whole earth is full of His glory*” (v. 3). He realized that God was *loftier* than he had imagined.

Isaiah was *awestruck* by this image! He knew about God, but *nothing* prepared him for the overwhelming reality of this encounter. He felt the impact when “*the foundations of the thresholds trembled*” at His voice (v. 4).

More than ever before, Isaiah realized how insignificant he was before such a holy God. He knew his lips were unclean, and he lived “*among a people of unclean lips*” (v. 5). He felt unworthy, but God allowed him to experience His mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

Isaiah also heard God ask, “*Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?*” Isaiah felt compelled to respond. He realized God looked for people who would dedicate their lives to serve Him. So, he responded, “*Here am I. Send me!*”

How committed are you to serving God? Be willing to go where He wants you to and do what He calls you to do. Seek a more intimate relationship with Him. Humble yourself before Him. Worship Him! Dedicate your life to Him! He is worthy! He is holy!

Reflect on God's holiness and awesomeness.

MONDAY

April

11

I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Isaiah 6:8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I long to have a more intimate relationship with You. I dedicate my life to You! Send me! In Jesus' name, amen.

TUESDAY

April

12

Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands...Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you...It shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass.

Isaiah 7:4-7 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for delivering me from fear. Thank You for Your protection, blessing, and peace. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do Not Fear

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 7

Judah had every reason to fear. They were vulnerable and knew it. Their fears intensified when their ancient rival Syria allied with neighboring Israel. Then, the two nations “went up to Jerusalem to make war against it” (v. 1). Looking at their resources, Judah realized they really could not defend themselves. It was a desperate situation.

When they sought God, He revealed that He had a *distinct perspective*. He knew the situation. He had heard the threats of the leader of Syria. (God called the leaders of Syria and Israel “two stubs of smoking firebrands.”)

But God reminded them that He was greater than *any* nation. They did not have to worry about any threats. They didn't need to be afraid or fainthearted, anxious or worried. Instead, He wanted them to focus on Him and trust Him.

Today we might face situations that cause fear or worry. But the Bible reminds us that in every situation, our response should be to turn to the Lord, commit these situations to Him, quiet ourselves and seek His face. Pray and seek His wisdom, help, and protection. Have faith.

Do you face circumstances that worry you? Troubling problems or adversaries? Commit them to God. Ask Him for His peace and wisdom, protection and guidance. Know that, in Him, you can be strong. He is with you. Trust Him to give you victory.

Write a prayer committing your worrisome situations to God.

Shedding of Blood

TODAY'S READING: LEVITICUS 17

Blood is central to life. One common expression is that life is defined as flesh and blood.

Through blood tests, we learn the *real* condition of our health – what diseases we carry, warning signs. Hundreds of procedures analyze blood to measure red and white blood cells. Doctors study blood chemistry, clotting, and acidity. Through blood tests we discover how body parts are functioning and an amazing number of other insights.

The Bible indicates that God is serious about blood. Confirming what doctors now know, it tells us that the life of all flesh is its blood (v. 14). We see the importance of blood during the time of Passover as it was the blood of the lamb that provided the sign that protected the Israelites from death (Exodus 12:3-7).

This role came to completion through the death of Jesus who was the “*Lamb of God*” (John 1:29). His death and the blood He shed brought life to us (Romans 8:3). The Bible tells us that we “*are made right with God when [we] believe that Jesus sacrificed his life*” for us (Romans 3:25 NLT).

Because of Jesus' blood “*we have redemption*” (Ephesians 1:7). We are forgiven (Hebrews 9:22) and freed from sin (Revelation 1:5).

During this Passover season, remember the blood that Jesus shed for *you*. His blood brings you forgiveness and healing, protection and covering. Because of His blood, it is finished.

Reflect on all Jesus' blood has done for you.

WEDNESDAY

April

13

As for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel... “The life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.”

Leviticus 17:14 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for shedding Your blood for me. I accept Your sacrificial death for me. Thank You for setting me free! In Your name, amen.

THURSDAY

April

14

They cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

John 19:15 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for my sins. You are my Lord. Use me to impact others for the Gospel. In Your name, amen.

Jesus' Death

TODAY'S READING: JOHN 19

Johann Sebastian Bach arrived in Leipzig in May 1723, the new music director at St. Thomas's church – in effect, the music director for the city. His appointment was part of the city's plans to improve its reputation. Bach threw himself into the challenge.

One of his first concerns was preparing the Good Friday service, the major church event of the year. He was expected to provide a passion, telling the story of Jesus' death through music. Bach decided to base his passion on John's Gospel. Like all of Bach's musical works, this project was about the music *and* the message because he was a committed Christian.

When his *St. John Passion* debuted in April 1724, it was an account of the Gospel in addition to being extraordinary music. As one scholar summarized, through music Bach had written "the doctrine of salvation."

Bach's *Passion* begins in Gethsemane and continues through Jesus' death. The high point is when the mob sang the word crucify. This is emotional music, rich in spiritual symbolism. Bach challenged listeners to *think* about Jesus' life and ministry, death, and what that death means for us.

Bach also pictured Jesus as the omnipotent ruler. We are driven to see Christ not just crucified, but also emerging in triumph.

Reflect on the death of Jesus, and rejoice that He rose from the dead. He was crucified, but now He reigns. Be sure that He reigns in *your* heart and life.

What do Jesus' death and resurrection mean to you personally?

The Lamb

TODAY'S READING: JOHN 1

The lamb is an important symbol. God Himself (Exodus 12:3-20) had instituted the Passover in which every family was to take an unblemished male lamb and offer it as a sacrifice. In Egypt, the blood of this lamb protected the family from death.

John the Baptist declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God. Jesus perfectly fulfilled His role as the Lamb during Passover on the night before He was crucified.

Jesus came to earth to become the sacrificial Lamb that God Himself was offering. Only Jesus was atoning for the sins of the *whole* world. His sacrificial death on the cross covered *every* sin. For those who believe and accept Him, Jesus *already* has taken away their sin.

Despite His finished work, it can be easy to hold onto sin. It can be hard to imagine that we could be forgiven for impure thoughts or actions that break God's commandments and be freed from unhealthy habits or problems that plague our lives.

But looking at Jesus, we realize that He is the Lamb of God. On the cross, the sacrifice was made. He took away our sin. The work has been *completed*. We just need to accept and receive what *already* has been done.

During this holy time of year, don't hold on to sins. Jesus died for *you*. Accept His finished work. Thanks to Jesus, you can be free and forgiven right now.

FRIDAY
April
15

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

John 1:29 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Jesus took away my sins. I confess my sins to You. Thank You for Your forgiveness and that I am free! In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer of confession and thanks for God's forgiveness.

SATURDAY

April

16

God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6:14

PRAYER:

Father, I owe everything to You. I glory in the cross of Christ. Thank You that He died for me and that I am forgiven. In His name, amen.

Glory in the Cross

TODAY'S READING: GALATIANS 6

Sir John Bowring had a distinguished career as an economist, writer, member of the British Parliament, and governor of Hong Kong. He had admirers and enemies. Some questioned his methods, but all agreed that he had great ability.

One day, Bowring was on a ship, sailing past Macao (off the coast of China). He saw on the shore the remains of an old church that had been ravaged by fire. Above the ruins, the spire of the church remained in place, with a cross standing strong and tall. That cross reminded him of what was important in life.

Inspired by that moment, Bowring wrote the hymn "In the Cross of Christ I Glory." He could have boasted about the successes of his career. Instead, he gloried in the cross.

His life had been filled with difficulties. But the cross changed everything. He wrote, "When the woes of life oërtake me, hopes deceive, and fears annoy, never shall the cross forsake me. Lo! it glows with peace and joy." The cross provided a peace "that knows no measure, joys that through all time abide."

Bowring's tombstone is marked not by his impressive resume, but by the title of this hymn. In death, he wanted the living to focus on Jesus and the cross.

Today, do not glory in your accomplishments, talents, or resources. As the Bible reminds us, remember to make your boast in the cross.

Thank God the Father for sending His Son to die on the cross for your sins.

Resurrection Reality

TODAY'S READING: ACTS 17

When Paul visited Athens, he saw a city dominated by idols. He began to reason with the people, teaching the truths of the Gospel. Thinking he spoke about “*strange things*,” they wanted to know more (v. 20).

He explained that God *commanded* everyone to turn away from idols and turn to Him. As a demonstration that this message was true, Paul explained that God had raised Jesus from the dead. But the idea of the resurrection proved to be too much for many of these sophisticated Athenians. They reacted by laughing. But some believed.

Many people are like these skeptics, simply rejecting the resurrection of the dead as unreasonable. Some can think of Jesus as a wise person but can't imagine that He rose from the dead.

At Easter, Christians celebrate the very thing that many people laugh at, including a belief that Jesus did rise from the dead, a *supernatural* fact. And “*all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back*” (1 Corinthians 15:23).

If you have decided to follow Jesus, others may mock you and reject the idea that He rose from the dead. But the Bible reminds us that the resurrection is *real* and central to our faith. The *fact* is that Jesus died and rose again, so you might have eternal life and victory over sin and the power of the enemy.

Celebrate this life-changing truth. Jesus has risen! He is risen indeed!

Write a praise to God for the miracle of the resurrection in your life.

SUNDAY
April
17

When they heard Paul speak of the resurrection of the dead, some laughed, but others said, “We want to hear more about this later.” That ended Paul’s discussion with them, but some joined him and became believers.

Acts 17:32-34 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Jesus rose from the dead and for the power of the resurrection. May that power be at work in my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

MONDAY

April

18

Herod the king... had James the brother of John executed with a sword... he proceeded to arrest Peter as well... (Now these were the days of Unleavened Bread)... Intending only after the Passover to bring him before the people.

Acts 12:1-4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for sending Jesus into the world. Thank You that He is my Passover lamb. In His name, amen.

New Testament Passover

TODAY'S READING: ACTS 12

Some might think that Passover was just an Old Testament tradition. But the New Testament makes clear that the early church *never* stopped celebrating Passover – even after Jesus' death and resurrection or His ascension into Heaven.

Those who believed in Him continued to gather to pray, learn, share what God had revealed to them, and preach the Gospel. But no one ever questioned the importance of the Passover. It remained central to their personal lives and all believers.

Important events took place during Passover. It was a meaningful day on the Jewish calendar. And it was an essential day for their relationship with God.

They were reminded that this day was special to Him. God Himself instituted this celebration. He called this “*the LORD's Passover*” (Exodus 12:11). And He commanded that this be celebrated *perpetually* in all generations. The disciples knew that *nothing* had changed.

Through the centuries, many Christians have forgotten the importance of Passover. But it remains an important day on God's calendar. It is filled with symbolic importance and is never to be forgotten.

Think about Passover and why it is so crucial to God. Seek to remember its principles. Be faithful to bring Him your special offerings as you observe this important time. Celebrate His faithfulness to you. And remember that Jesus is your Passover lamb.

Write a prayer of worship to the perfect Passover Lamb, Jesus.

Bearing the Cross

TODAY'S READING: JOHN 19

When composer Arvo Pärt left Estonia for Austria in 1980, he took with him the first sketches for what became his *St. John Passion*. This was an important work for him, published soon after he arrived in the West.

As a Christian, Pärt left his homeland in part so he could write music like this. He wanted to have the freedom to express what was in his heart and write about Jesus' life and death, teachings and resurrection, miracles.

Pärt's *St. John Passion* told the story of Jesus's death using a text developed from the Gospel of John. The work lasts about 70 minutes. In amazing and subtle ways, all musical elements link back to the text and reinforce the Gospel message. Those who dig deeper can discover how the music itself helps tell the story.

Pärt began his work with an account of Peter's denial that he was a disciple of Jesus (John 18:25). The passion ends with the crucifixion. The most extended section is the confrontation between Jesus and Pilate and the crowd's calls for Jesus' death. But the whole story is told.

The story of Jesus' death has been told in many ways, styles, and interpretations over the centuries. We need to study, ponder, and share the story of why He died and what His death means for each of us.

What does His death mean for you?

Reflect on what it means to pick up your cross and follow Jesus.

TUESDAY
April
19

*He, bearing His cross,
went out to a place
called the Place of a
Skull, which is called in
Hebrew, Golgotha.*

John 19:17 NKJV

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank
You for dying in my
place. Help me to pick
up my cross and follow
You. In Your name,
amen.

WEDNESDAY

April

20

Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do. And they divided his garments and cast lots.

Luke 23:34

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross. Speak to me! Thank You that the work is finished. In Your name, amen.

Last Words

TODAY'S READING: LUKE 23

Heinrich Schütz is considered a prominent German composer of the 17th century. His life spanned an era of instability in Central Europe with wars, economic hardship, and religious division. Synthesizing styles, he wrote music that transcended the times and continues to speak to us.

While nations struggled with the Thirty Years' War, Schütz focused on Jesus' death on the cross. The result was one of his greatest works, "The Seven Words of Our Dear Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ that He Spoke on the Holy Cross." He wrote on the score, "If you love the world, then you are dead. But if you die in His red wounds, then He lives in your heart."

Schütz understood the significance of the words Jesus spoke from the cross. Over the centuries, many have tried to capture the essence of those words. Jesus' final words are timeless, words of forgiveness, words about eternal life: "*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43). They're words of compassion, like the words Jesus spoke to His mother: "*Woman, behold, thy son!*" (John 19:26-27).

Jesus' words expressed how alone He felt: "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46). His words remind us of His humanity: "*I thirst*" (John 19:28). He spoke words of completion: "*It is finished*" (John 19:30) and words of surrender: "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*" (Luke 23:46).

Words can change our lives! Ponder them.

What do you hear Jesus asking you to do with His final words?

Follow God

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 8

As a prophet, Isaiah needed to know the *specific* ministry to which he was called, the messages God wanted him to deliver, the tasks God wanted him to accomplish, and the focus of his energy.

Isaiah knew that God warned him “*not to think like everyone else.*” God had a particular design for his life and had given Isaiah specific talents, gifts, and resources. God called him to do *specific* things that He asked of *no one* else.

This didn't mean that Isaiah was superior. It just meant that he was *different*. He had unique assignments, and God expected him to concentrate on these assignments. Others might question his actions, but Isaiah was accountable to God alone.

Isaiah was demonstrating an important spiritual principle. For each of us is *unique* in God's sight. Each of us has been given special gifts, talents, and resources, and specific tasks to accomplish.

What is God's call for you? What goals has He given you? Are you focused on these goals? What specific talents and resources has He given you? Are you being a good steward of those resources? Have you experienced any criticism that has led you to compromise?

Remember, you are unique and have special assignments. Humble yourself before God. Don't just think like everyone else. Serve Him. Commit your life to Him. Seek to follow Him, to accomplish His specific purposes for you.

THURSDAY

April

21

The LORD has given me a strong warning not to think like everyone else does.

Isaiah 8:11 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your call on my life. I dedicate my time and resources to You. Use me for Your Kingdom and glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

What is God calling you to do in this season of your life?

FRIDAY

April

22

Remember...in all [David's] affliction; how he swore to the LORD...“I certainly will not enter my house, nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes...until I find a place for the LORD.”

Psalms 132:1-5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, You are the most important part of my life. I love You. Help me walk in Your ways and please You. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Place for the Lord

TODAY'S READING: PSALM 132

David knew he needed to find “a place” for the Lord. He was thinking about a physical location, a “dwelling place” (v. 5). He wanted a devoted area where he could worship God without interruptions.

But the principle he described has broad implications. This can be a place in our hearts and minds. It can be a part of our daily *schedule* when we can concentrate on God, call on His name, read His Word, and listen for His voice apart from the distractions of the world.

The psalmist indicated that finding this place was a matter of *urgency*. He vowed not to rest until he found it. He was demonstrating that his relationship with God was his highest *priority*. Nothing else was more important.

The Bible tells us that God looks for this kind of dedication. We may think we are pleasing to Him and that we are spiritually mature. But we need to give Him a place of *preeminence*. As we place Him first in our lives, we can expect Him to pour out more of His blessings.

Today, think about *your* schedule and *priorities*. What kind of place does God have in your life? Have you allowed other activities to become dominant? Do you spend quality time praying and studying the Word? Make sure that you “*find a place for the LORD*.” Make this a priority!

What is your quiet time like? Do you need to make changes?

The Impact of Pride

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 16

The Bible states it clearly: God *hates* pride (Proverbs 8:13). His prophets warned of the consequences of pride. Dealing with pride was central to Isaiah's ministry. He warned that God would act against pride in the lives of individuals and nations. He prophesied that *"the pride of humanity will be humbled and the arrogance of people will be brought low"* (Isaiah 2:17).

When God looked at Moab, He saw persistent pride. They had a reputation for *"excessive pride."* They were known for arrogance. It was a nation filled with boasts, but these boasts were *"idle"* and *"false."* There could be only one consequence: They had to be humbled. God would deal with their pride.

The Bible warns about the dangers of pride. We learn that *"pride goes before destruction"* (Proverbs 16:18). When our hearts are proud, we become blind to our sins and weaknesses. We trust in ourselves and our own abilities and forget about God.

Pride is like a poison that contaminates our lives. In contrast, humility is an attitude and lifestyle that leads to success. As Jesus Himself said, *"Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted"* (Matthew 23:12).

Today, ask God to purge you of any pride. Humble yourself before Him and ask Him to give you the heart of a servant. Turn from sin and anything that blocks the flow of His blessings. Fill your life with His Word.

Where do you need to eradicate pride from your life?

SATURDAY

April

23

We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride; even of his arrogance, pride, and fury; his idle boasts are false. Therefore Moab will wail; everyone of Moab will wail.

Isaiah 16:6-7 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for pride. I humble myself before You. Help me to please and serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

SUNDAY

April

24

All you who inhabit the world, and live on earth, as soon as a flag is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear it.

Isaiah 18:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to live according to Your righteous standards. Give me a burden for souls. Use me to reach the lost with the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

God's Standard

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 18

God told Isaiah that the day would come when He would raise a flag. This would be a *symbol* of God and His irrefutable Word – the rules and principles by which we are to live and be judged.

God warned that this standard would be “*raised on the mountains*,” visible for all to see. But that was not all. A trumpet would blow. Everyone would hear it and know that God was getting ready to act! Soon, harvest time would arrive!

Jesus taught that the harvest was *the end of the age, a time when crops would be gathered*, when there would be pruning and a time of separation and judgment (Matthew 13:24-43).

Jesus said tares (weeds) are in the world. These “*are the sons of the evil one*” (Matthew 13:38). They are growing all around us, causing confusion, spreading unrighteousness, and encouraging people to ignore God's Word. But God's harvest time will bring a time of judgment.

This is a warning for us. The day will come when each of us must give account for what we have done on the day of judgment.

God has an eternal plan for the ages. He is the Great Judge. And He has issued laws by which each of us will be judged.

Don't be distracted by the world's standards or popular opinions. Be sure to live according to *His* Word. His truths *never* change. Base your life on His principles. Don't compromise.

What's your plan to reach the lost within your sphere of influence?

Be a Watchman

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 21

The watchman performed critical functions for cities in biblical times. In those days before electronics, people needed to rely on their natural senses and be good observers with discernment.

These watchmen were to be always on guard and alert, always at their post, always looking out for potential danger. They observed everything around them, always ready to warn people of any threat.

Their function was important for the safety of towns and even nations. They also played a spiritual role by warning of beliefs that could weaken their resolve and poison their faith. They were alert to ideas that could creep into minds and hearts.

Our families and churches still need watchmen. The Bible warns that we face a dangerous enemy who can appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) but whose goal is to kill and destroy (John 10:10). We are in a spiritual war. As believers, we are called to be spiritual watchmen, constantly on guard. We are to be people of prayer, filled with the Spirit, sensitive to the Spirit.

Are you being a watchman? Are you at your post “*day after day*” and “*night after night*”? Or are you taking your safety for granted? You need to be on guard. Seek God in dedicated prayer. Ask Him about your role. Listen to His Spirit. If you are sensitive to Him, He will help you be a watchman for your family and your church.

How are you staying alert for spiritual attacks around you?

MONDAY

April

25

Put a watchman on the city wall [...] “Day after day I have stood on the watchtower, my lord. Night after night I have remained at my post. Now at last – look! Here comes a man in a chariot!”

Isaiah 21:6-9 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be a watchman, sensitive to attacks. Show me how I can warn others and be ready myself. In Jesus' name, amen.

TUESDAY

April

26

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help...who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!

Isaiah 31:1 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, give me Your perspective on my life and the world. I seek first Your Kingdom. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Passing of Time

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 31

Joachim Raff was considered a major musical personality. In 1875, a leading authority declared he was one of three “musical chiefs” alive. (The other two were Richard Wagner and Johannes Brahms.) “By common consent,” it was said his music stood “head and shoulders” above other composers.

Yet today his music is rarely played, and his name is known mostly to specialists. What happened? In many ways, his music did not pass the test of time. What sounded meaningful to his generation had little relevance to people in subsequent decades.

This change in perception reminds us of the *brevity* of life, and how difficult it is to have *perspective* on issues of our time. Things that seem critical today eventually can seem unimportant. What is popular today often is forgotten. Today's fashions become out of date within months. Ideas that seem normal eventually can seem passé. And people who are popular soon can become unpopular.

The Bible reminds us that these patterns are true in every generation. This is why we are reminded to trust in God, not people, governments, politicians, kings, experts, scholars, or entertainers.

The Bible tells us, “*Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD*” (Jeremiah 17:7). We are warned not to trust in princes but hope in God “*who keeps faith forever*” (Psalm 146:6).

Whom are you trusting in your life?

What happens when you follow the crowd and go with what's popular?

Abundance

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 41

Israel had many needs. Feeling overwhelmed and hopeless, many Israelites were filled with fear. But God reminded them that He was the Lord. Despite appearances, they could be confident He would help them. He was their Redeemer and promised to crush their enemies (vs. 13-16).

Of specific concern, the people of Israel were thirsty. Desperately searching for water, they could find none. But God promised to provide for them.

He promised a time of *abundance*. At that moment they only saw deserts, but He promised to turn that deserted place “*into pools of water.*” The “*parched ground*” would be turned “*into springs.*” They would *overflow* with blessings.

The Bible *promises* that God wants us to *flourish* just like a palm tree and overflow with blessings even in places that seem barren (Psalm 92:12). But we are called to stay faithful to Him, trust Him, and not give up.

Right now, what are your needs? Does it feel like you are dwelling in a desert? Do you feel like your needs never will be met? Do you feel helpless and unsure of what to do?

The Bible urges you to *believe* God's promises, commit your needs to Him, trust Him. You are to stay *faithful* with the resources you have been given and believe that He already has prepared *abundance* for you!

As you sow seeds into God's kingdom, watch as He blesses you!

How can you focus your eyes on God and His living water?

WEDNESDAY

April

27

I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.

Isaiah 41:18 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, I believe You desire to bless me and fill me with Your abundance. I receive the blessings You want to flow into my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

THURSDAY

April

28

He was despised and abandoned by men, a man of great pain and familiar with sickness; and like one from whom people hide their faces, He was despised, and we had no regard for Him.

Isaiah 53:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, thank You for being my Savior! Thank You for setting me free and giving me life. Use me to reach souls for You. In Your name, amen.

What a Savior!

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 53

Born in 1838 in a log cabin in rural Pennsylvania, Philip P. Bliss was raised in a home where the focus was on Bible reading and prayer. He left home at age eleven to work in lumber camps but stayed true to the Lord. During those years, he began studying toward a goal of being a full-time musician.

Known for his beautiful singing voice and the powerful songs he composed, Bliss devoted his life to the music of evangelism. He became part of the outreach of his friend Major D.W. Whittle. Selflessly, he never copyrighted any composition, preferring that they be used freely for the Gospel.

One of his last hymns describes what Jesus meant to him: "Hallelujah! What a Savior!" Bliss marveled that the "Man of sorrows" came to reclaim "ruined sinners." We deserve to be condemned, but He bore our shame and stood in our place. And He sealed our pardon "with His blood."

While we are "guilty, vile, and helpless," He was the "spotless Lamb of God" who provided "full atonement." The work truly "is finished!" Now He is in Heaven. But, someday, He will return as "our glorious King, all His ransomed home to bring."

What does Jesus mean to *you*? He shed His blood that *you* might be freed of sin. He loves you with everlasting love. He has prepared an eternal home for you. Thank Him! Praise Him! Serve Him! What a Savior!

Reflect on what Jesus and His sacrifice mean to you.

King of My Life

TODAY'S READING: REVELATION 19

Jennie Hussey grew up in New Hampshire. There, she dedicated much of her life to caring for her sister who was an invalid. In her free time, Jennie liked to write poems about her faith and the difference Jesus had made. In 1921, she wrote a poem that told of how she had surrendered her life to serve Him.

She realized that Jesus set an example by being a servant and dying for our sins. She wrote, "King of my life, I crown Thee now, Thine shall the glory be; lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow, lead me to Calvary."

She expressed what Jesus went through for her. She wrote about her desire to see the tomb where Jesus had been buried. And she realized that she needed to take up her cross daily and follow Him.

She prayed, "May I be willing, Lord, to bear daily my cross for Thee; even Thy cup of grief to share, Thou hast borne all for me." Everything in life pointed to what Jesus had done for her: "Lest I forget Gethsemane, lest I forget Thine agony; lest I forget Thy love for me, lead me to Calvary."

Remember what Jesus has done for you. Some day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. Crown Him the King of *your* life. Commit everything to Him. He is "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

FRIDAY

April

29

On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Revelation 19:16 NASB

PRAYER:

Jesus, You are my Lord. Thank You for all that You have done for me. I dedicate myself to serving You. In Your name, amen.

How can you take up your cross daily for Christ?

SATURDAY

April

30

For I am convinced that neither death nor life... neither the present nor the future, nor any powers... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39 NIV

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for Your love for me. I love You! In Your name, amen.

An Amazing Love

TODAY'S READING: ROMANS 8

Samuel Crossman's life was complicated. Living in the 17th century during a time of religious divisions, he was ejected from the Church of England even though he was a minister. During his exile, he wrote a poem called, "My Song Is Love Unknown." This later became a hymn (with music by John Ireland).

In the face of conflicts, Crossman made clear that his focus was on Jesus. The song of his life, he wrote, was a love so profound that no one could understand it. Jesus displayed this love that Jesus displayed. It was "love to the loveless" that showed how He loved everyone. Crossman was amazed that Jesus could love him so: "Who am I, that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh and die?"

Jesus showed His love by coming from Heaven to bring salvation and forgiveness. Some respond with praises, "resounding all the day hosannas to their King." Yet, like the throngs as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, they could turn around and want a man like Barabbas to go free but cry for Jesus to be crucified. Yet Jesus still went to the cross, showing compassion even for those who crucified Him.

Crossman knew that Jesus was his friend "in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend."

Remember that Jesus loves you! And He longs to have a love relationship with you – a divine love, an eternal love.

Reflect on the depth of Jesus' love for you.

My Redeemer

It's who He is AND what He does!

Have you ever had your *best-efforts* crumble into the dust? Crushed dreams and painful losses are the humbling reality most everyone experiences at some point. That is why this month's name-of-God focus is so glorious: **My Redeemer**. Redemption is not just what God *does*, it's *who He is!* Nothing is ever a total loss when you know God as your personal Redeemer.

God's redemptive heart cries out from cover to cover in the Bible, but only Job speaks the name aloud:

I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the end he will stand on the dust (Job 19:25 CSB).

Great hope flows from believing God can redeem tragic situations, but life-transforming awe radiates from the lives of those who see God as a personal rescuer. Knowing God as **My Redeemer** and believing He (and His glory) will come stand on the dust of my broken best, positions me to be used by God in magnificent ways.

Mary the mother of Jesus held this powerful view of God. We see it in her response to the angel's proclamation of her *highly favored* status:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior (Luke 1:46-47).

A humble heart sees God's greatness and receives His abundant favor and grace. The tragedies of life become triumphs when you welcome God into the wreckage of life. Truly, "*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit*" (Psalm 34:18 CSB). The redemptive heart of God loves to bring blessings to His children.

Do you have places in your life that need restoration? Your **Redeemer** lives, and He's waiting for the invitation to enter your pain and transform it with His glory. Jesus came to destroy every work of the devil. Invite Him in to transform your trial into a testimony of His glory – and then tell the world about it! ❖

Rebel with a Cause

How to stand *for* the Word



by Ben Cerullo

God views rebelliousness and stubbornness negatively. He says, *“rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is...as idolatry”* (1 Samuel 15:23). But Jesus took *“captivity captive”* and now leads us in victory (Ephesians 4:8). Jesus can redeem our rebellious, stubborn tendencies and use them for good.

Our world is in serious trouble, but as Christians, we are equipped to do something about it! Rebellion against God’s way leads only to death and destruction, but rebellion against the world is every believer’s call.

Friend, we must stand solidly on the Word of God to change the downward spiral of today’s world. Consider these important truths about this battleground we live in:

1. The world exerts a powerful influence on those who turn from God (Romans 1).

2. Satan, who hates God and believers, controls this world (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19).
3. Jesus has already triumphed over the devil and made a spectacle of him (Colossians 2:15).
4. The Spirit of God lives in you, and He’s greater than the ruler of this world! (1 John 4:4).

In a world that increasingly calls for conformity to ungodly standards, standing on God’s Word requires a strength of character that others may deem rebellious or stubborn. Are you confident enough in your knowledge of Scripture to be able to stand? There are no substitutes for the Word of God and prayer. God’s soldiers must make both a priority.

These days are not unlike the days of the early church. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus

about standing firm in the face of persecution. Let's look at his instructions:

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Ephesians 6:13).

Do you armor up every morning? You need to – as a rebel to the world, you are in enemy territory and need to be divinely equipped. The exciting truth about your armor is that every piece represents Jesus Christ. In other words, armoring up is sheltering in Christ!

Belt of Truth – Roman soldiers used a belt to hold their tunic in place and attach weapons. As a believer, integrity to the **truth** is the first step in dressing for victory.

Breastplate of Righteousness – A chainmail breastplate protected the soldier's vital organs. Your heart and mind are Satan's primary targets. Let Jesus' righteousness protect you.

Shoes of Peace – Cleated fighting shoes helped soldiers stay upright in battle. Peace with God provides the solid footing needed to emerge victorious from battle.

Shield of Faith – Roman soldiers used leather-covered wooden shields dipped in water to deflect flaming arrows. Faith shields you from the fiery attacks of Satan.

Helmet of Salvation – Warfare requires a sharp mind! God has given you the mind of Christ, and being sure of God's love and salvation keeps your mind prepared for the Spirit's instructions.

Sword of the Spirit – Soldiers demolished opponents with their swords. The Word of God is the sword that can slay your temptations and allow you to gain Kingdom ground!

Paul closed out his letter of instruction by emphasizing praying **always** in the Spirit. Effective battle against the evil one requires a constant conversation with the Father. He wants to hear you – and He wants to be heard. The battle belongs to the Lord, and He will direct you step by step. Will you suit up and listen up? The world is waiting on you. ❖

The Kingdom of God is **GROWING**

“Now can I start over with a renewed mind and a new heart, sowing to the glory of God and into my real future. God bless you all.” – Louis

“I was deeply unhappy with life and had a great desire to know God, but I didn’t know how. Inspiration TV helped me find the way. Now I am so completely in love with God. It is the relationship I always wanted. He is faithful, wonderful, and there are no impossibilities with Him. It was all so worth it! He is great!” – Ekaterina

“Jesus came in a tangible way. He came in and put out sin, darkness, pain, hurt, loss, and failure. We are believing for victory even through bleak circumstances. We’re pursuing Jesus and taking steps to join a local church.” – Sabina

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A Merry Heart...

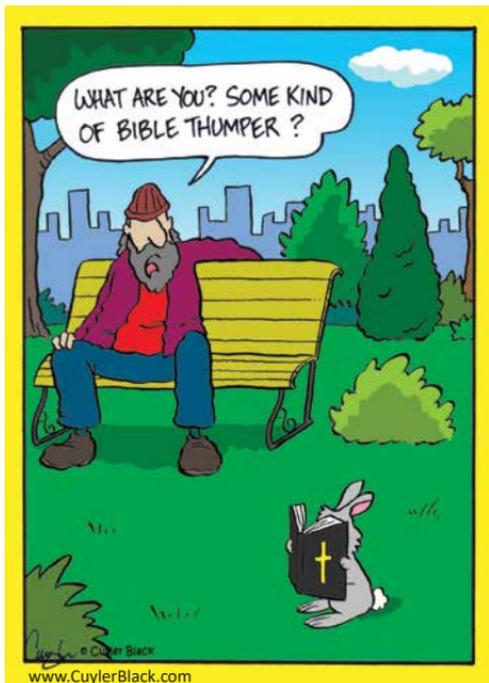
does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex staring at the plaque that was hanging in the church foyer. The plaque was covered with names, and small American flags were mounted on either side of it. The seven-year-old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside him, and said quietly, "Good morning, Alex."

"Good morning, Pastor," replied the young man, still focused on the plaque. "Pastor McGhee, what is this?" Alex asked.

"Well, son, it's a memorial to all the men and women who have died in the service."

Soberly, they stood together, staring at the plaque. Little Alex's voice was barely audible when he finally managed to ask, "Which one, the 9:00 or 10:30 service?"



An associate minister visited our Sunday school class one morning, and asked, "What would you like me to talk about?"

One child spoke up boldly and said, "About 3 minutes!"

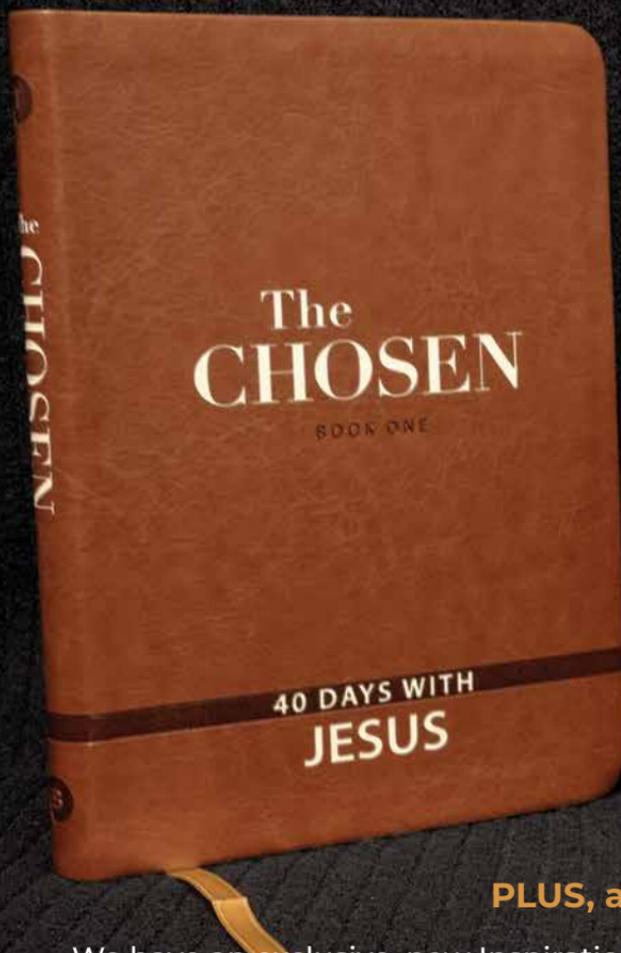


Got some clean, Christian humor you'd like to share?

Email it to: MerryHeart@inspiration.org

Want to Walk with Jesus?

This month's THANK YOU GIFT, *The CHOSEN: 40 DAYS WITH JESUS*, is a devotional based on the first season of the popular TV show *The Chosen*. In this powerful book, you'll experience what those early followers felt as you enter into the action and emotion of living with Jesus. Those who truly encounter the Messiah never remain the same!



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We have an exclusive, new Inspiration Anointing Oil to share with you! Handcrafted by Israeli artisan and believer Jeries Facouseh, this sacred vial proclaims the glory of God and celebrates His gifts of faith, hope, and love.

*Turn to **Page 28** for details on how to receive your
THANK YOU GIFTS this month - while supplies last!*