

# *God Is...*

*40 Days Discovering the Attributes of God*





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*To all who read this book,*

*May these 40 days of devotionals stir in your heart, may they convict and uplift you, may they speak peace and truth into your life, and may they challenge you to go deeper and grow closer to God. As you journey with us through the attributes of God during these days of Lent, our prayer is that you would come to know Him in a new and fresh way, and continue to make Him your all.*

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## **LETTER FROM PASTOR JIM**

I am so excited that you have made the decision to walk through this devotional for the next 40 days. Over the next seven weeks, you'll journey with us as we explore 20 different attributes of God. With each new attribute we'll see a different perspective of God, and our hope is that by the end we will have a greater and fuller understanding of Him.

These devotionals were all written by our church staff and are designed to challenge your thinking and nudge you into expanding your knowledge of who God is. Starting on Ash Wednesday, these devotionals run Monday–Saturday each week, all leading up to Easter Sunday.

Come walk as a disciple of Jesus through the attributes of God and grow in your knowledge of who God is, what He's about, and what He has called us to do.

It is my hope and prayer that after these 40 days, your view of God—how you think about Him—would be greater and more complete. My desire is for these simple truths to sink deep into your heart, that they may shape your walk and prayer life, and ultimately, lead you into a deeper relationship with the Lord of all creation.

May God bless you in our study together,

Jim Heiligman  
Senior Pastor

An aerial photograph of a valley at sunset. The sky is a mix of dark, heavy clouds and a bright, golden glow from the setting sun. The valley below is filled with dense green trees and some buildings, with a winding road visible. In the distance, a range of mountains is silhouetted against the bright sky.

*I Am*

THE SEVEN "I AM" STATEMENTS

*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 3:14** —

“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Shakespeare got a lot right in his various plays and soliloquies, but he missed the mark on this one. A name by any other name is just the same, except when it comes to the name of the Lord, Yahweh. No other name will suffice, ever.

Upon review of the conversation that Moses has with God in Exodus 3, we find it almost humorous that Moses would be asking for verification of name or authority when talking with a burning bush, but that’s Moses for you! But God in his gracious nature gives his name, I AM THAT I AM. Queue goosebumps on your arms. This name describes a core attribute of God, that He exists because He exists. He does not exist because you want Him to, or perhaps not want Him to. Everything in existence has come from something, but God did not; He just has always been. If this seems confusing, it’s because our minds cannot fathom this!

Believing the fact that God is self-existent is foundational to our theology. God did not come from something, therefore there is nothing, no one above or beside Him. He is all that has been or ever will be for it has all come from Him! He exists because of Himself and not from anything man has done or ever will do. And what’s truly amazing about this awesome God whose very nature we can’t even begin to grasp, He wants to know you....mind blown again.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, you are the Great I Am. You require nothing. You simply are. Let that truth sink deep and help me to trust you all the more.

*Nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

— ACTS 17:25 —

While Paul is in Athens, he notices all around him artistic works honoring false gods and this greatly disturbs him. So he begins teaching the event that launched Christianity, the resurrection of Jesus. They were intrigued by his teaching. Maybe because they didn't want to bypass a god and in doing so offend him or her. Which is why they had an inscription on an altar that read, "To an Unknown God." Part of his sermon is found in our text but allow me to paraphrase: The God of all creation doesn't live in a temple, built by human hands. Nor does this one true God need our offerings. He needs nothing at all because He is self-existing.

God is not lacking; He has no needs. If He was lacking or had needs, then He wouldn't be God. God exists in and of Himself. He depends on nothing and no one, and this is a quality unique to God alone.

Sometime ago, as I was putting Clarke to bed, I prayed to God thanking God for his creation. I thanked God for making the sun, moon and stars. I thanked Him for making trees and flowers, birds and other animals. And then I thanked God for making Clarke. The moment I said, "Amen" Clarke looked up and asked me, "Daddy, who made God?" So I told him that nobody made God and that God has always been there. I could see in his eyes, his mind turning in wonder and amazement, and then he said, "Wow!" How about you? When was the last time you sat in wonder at this self-existing God?

### **PRAY TODAY**

God, there's nothing I can offer that you are in need of. All belongs to you, because all comes from you. Help me remember, O Lord.



*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

— **REVELATION 1:8** —

God the Father and Jesus both describe themselves as the Alpha and the Omega in scripture. This may seem like a foreign concept, but it is simply the beginning and ending letters of the Greek alphabet. It is the equivalent of saying, God has always been and always will be. Within this divine proclamation, there is hope for the future and strength from the past for everyone who believes. God's eternal nature springs forth hope which conquers anything we could ever encounter.

Because He is the Alpha, we can intimately know and commune with the source of all creation. Because He is the beginning, there is nothing greater, no person better, no created thing which can take His place. He is supreme! And we have an invitation from the Alpha to bring our cares and concerns as sons and daughters before Him.

Because He is the Omega, history has a trajectory. There is no power, no ruler, that can overcome or change the course the Father has set. He has overcome; and we have shared in this victory! We are overcomers, because He is the Omega. There is nothing our God cannot handle, and no future where He is not a part of the story.

He is the Ancient of Days, the everlasting Father. With such an eternal God, what have we to fear? May you find confidence and hope today in the God who was, who is, and who will always be.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Alpha and Omega, nothing comes before or after you. You are the beginning and the end. May you be my beginning and end as well.

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

— **PSALM 90:2** —

The eternal nature of God is hard to grasp. It's not particularly difficult to imagine something without an end. We do that all the time. Our concept of eternal life falls within that idea. But the flip side is where our minds fall short. To have no beginning, no starting place, that lays outside the bounds of human understanding. Yet, that is God. From infinity past to infinity future, God was and is and is to come.

C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity* gives what I find to be a helpful illustration. Draw a line on a sheet of paper to represent time. The start of the line marks the beginning of time and the end of the line represents the end of time. Now, ask yourself where is God on that line? That's a trick question. God is not just merely on the line, existing in time. God is the sheet of paper. God is outside of time. He is not bound by it. Time exists within God, not the other way around.

Today, as we think about God, let us ask ourselves how reassuring is it to know that He is not simply present in the now, but present in the future as well. Does it not become easier to trust Him with the future, your future—because He is already there? That is the God we worship today and every day—the God of everlasting to everlasting.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Everlasting Father, I will never fully understand your eternal nature. You have always been and always will be. You know the future, because you are already there. Lead me today into the future you are writing and have written.

An aerial photograph of a valley at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, golden light, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a soft glow over the landscape. The foreground shows a dense forest of trees, and the middle ground features a small town or village with buildings and roads. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a hazy sky. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

*I Am*

THE BREAD OF LIFE

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,  
and his greatness is unsearchable.*

— **PSALM 145:3** —

We often praise people based on merit and performance. As a matter of fact, it is expected, and shame on us if we fail to recognize or praise people during special occasions. But when was the last time you praised someone, just because? That is something rarely seen and practiced in today's society. Unfortunately, most of us tend to treat God that way. When we praise Him, we do it because of what He's done for us or given to us. But do we ever take time to worship Him just because of who He is?

David in this psalm praises God solely for who He is—a holy and exalted God, a God that is unsearchable and transcendent.

I know that it is difficult to worship someone who is unsearchable, infinite, and far removed from us; someone who is beyond our comprehension. But not David, when he ponders on the greatness of the unsearchable God, he reaches towards the unknowable and bursts forth in praise.

Have we lost our sense of awe in worship? The paradox of Christian worship, states Warren Wiersbe, is that “we seek to see the invisible, know the unknowable, comprehend the incomprehensible, and experience the eternal.” It may be a paradox, but it is the essence of David's praise and should be ours as well.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Heavenly father, I praise you simply for who you are. You're greatness is unsearchable. I cannot grasp all that you are. But in that I will praise you all the more.

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

— **ISAIAH 55:9** —

I once read that man trying to comprehend God was like trying to fill a gallon jug with all the water in the oceans. Physically impossible! The vastness, volume and weight of the ocean is far beyond what any gallon jug could possibly contain and one would find it silly to even try!

There are some people who really struggle with trusting in a God they cannot fully understand or comprehend. For them, faith is only possible if they can understand in full and if they can't, they dismiss the whole idea of God. I confess that it has never been difficult for me to acknowledge my limitations when trying to understand God. I don't need to have every "i" dotted and every "t" crossed to trust and believe. That's called faith: trusting that what I do know of Him—His character, faithfulness and sacrificial love—will fill in the gaps so to speak of what I don't understand.

There are many times in life where we can't make sense of God's purposes in the world around us. I am thankful that I can be reminded that His ways are higher than mine and where my best thoughts can't imagine anything "good" coming from my circumstances, His creativity and purpose are far beyond anything I could dream. I can trust Him and find comfort that He is above all that I can see or even imagine.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, how can I know your thoughts? How can I know your ways? You transcend all that I can understand. I trust you, O Lord. Your ways are perfect and I submit to you.

*“Can you find out the deep things of God?  
Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?”*

— **JOB 11:7** —

I like fishing. I'm not particularly any good at it, but I like to do it. Sitting in the stillness of nature, waiting in anticipation for the big one, the fight to reel it in once I've got one on my line—I love every part of the experience. The allure of searching for and finding that perfect spot, where you know the fish are going to be, that might be the most fun part. But like any good fisherman, once I find it, I'm not telling anyone. If everyone knew where the fish were, they'd all fish there and soon my experience would be ruined. In economics it's referred to as the tragedy of the commons, and it is a common problem when people have free access to a limited resource.

With God though, there is no tragedy of the commons. You can consume all you wish of His glorious nature, and still there will be no less of Him for anyone else. God is not limited by anything or anyone. For all of eternity we can mine the deep riches of His majesty, and still have no less of Him to discover.

Today, reflect on the infinity of God. He does not grow weary or faint. He is not a source that depletes or needs replenishing. Does our consumption of Him reflect that? Do we yearn for all of Him? Do we hoard Him in our heart afraid to share Him with others? What does our walk today say about our belief in God?

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, nothing is beyond you. There is no task, no idea, no thing that could even begin to test the limits of your power. I seek you earnestly, O Lord. I can have all of you and still there is no less of you. I want all of you Lord. I refuse to settle for less than you.

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

— **ROMANS 11:33** —

Up to this point in the book of Romans, Paul has been laying out for his readers a number of deep theological truths. Now as he ponders in amazement what God has done for us through His Son Jesus, Paul bursts out in praise. Or to put it another way, his theology has led to doxology.

And as he thinks of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, the only appropriate word he can find to describe it is “deep.” They are deep in the sense that they are unknown to us. They are unsearchable and unreachable. God has given us a glimpse, but there is still more. No matter how deep we dig, there will always be more that we don’t understand. There will always be a depth of God that we do not know because we are finite and our God is infinite.

Many of us want a God that we can get a handle on, a God that we can understand and easily explain. But that is simply not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is infinite. It was the British philosopher Evelyn Underhill who once said, “If God were small enough to be understood. He would not be big enough to be worshiped.” Today, let’s worship the God who is beyond our understanding, the God without limits, the God who is infinite in all that He is.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, there is no end to your depth. I can mine the deepness of your being for all eternity and never find the bottom. The more I know you and the closer I get to you, the more I learn that I don’t understand or know about you. Today, I yearn for all of you, Lord.

*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!*

— **1 KINGS 8:27** —

The word immense comes from the Latin word for immeasurable. Have you ever seen something that was so immense that it truly captivated you? Something so large that it seemed immeasurable? My mind goes to the many oceans on the earth. Have you ever sat out on the coast and looked off at the vast amount of water that seems to never end? It is truly captivating how immeasurable the ocean seems to be. Although the oceans are massive, God is bigger.

As we read in 1 Kings 8, God is so big and so great nothing can contain Him. His love, power, and goodness are so immense that nothing can even come close to being measured in comparison. Why then do we sometimes feel as if God is not big enough to help us? If God is so immense, which we just read that He is, why do we not trust Him for help, provision, peace, and comfort? I believe N.T. Wright sums it up perfectly, “It’s not great faith you need; it is faith in a great God”.

If you need rest, do you believe God is big enough to provide rest? Are you struggling with temptation, do you believe God is big enough to allow you to overcome? God’s love and power cannot be measured. He has the power to help us in each and every circumstance, but we have to pray and believe that He is great enough to meet these needs. How do you view God? Right now, stop and ask God to remind you of His immense love and power.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, remind me today of how big you are. Let your immense love and power flow over and through me, O Lord, for your glory.



*All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted  
by him as less than nothing and emptiness.*

— **ISAIAH 40:17** —

How often do you think about the immensity of God?

The immensity of God is explained by Dr. J. Pye Smith in *First Lines of Christian Theology* to be the absolute necessity of being, considered in relation to space.

“There is with God no diffusion nor contraction, no extension nor circumspection, or any such relation to space as belongs to limited natures,” Smith says. “God is equally near to, and equally far from, every point of space and every atom of the universe. He is universally and immediately present, not as a body, but as a spirit; not by motion, or penetration, or filling, as would be predicted of a diffused fluid, or in any way as if the infinity of God were composed of a countless number of finite parts, but in a way peculiar to his own spiritual and perfect nature, and of which we can form no conception.”

No one can comprehend the immensity of God. Whatever you think of when you think of immensity, think again. Whether the vastness of the oceans, the depths of the deepest mining shafts, or the seemingly infinite size of outer space, they all fall short of the immensity of God. He is far greater, far bigger than any thought you could ever have. Today, let that truth sink deep. Does that truth demand changes in your thoughts and actions?

### **PRAY TODAY**

God, you are infinitely greater than anything I can imagine. Lord, use that truth to lead me to give myself wholly over to you.

An aerial photograph of a valley at sunset. The sky is a deep orange and yellow, with soft clouds. The valley below is filled with green trees and some buildings, with mountains visible in the distance. The overall mood is peaceful and inspiring.

*I Am*

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

*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 —

Light an object with a single light source and you'll see shadows emerge. While one surface may be fully lit, another will be left in darkness. No matter what angle you light it from, every object will have a dark side. Its contours mark the variation of its surface and create the shadows we see. They mark the various imperfections of the object in view. We, ourselves, are no different. We all have dark sides exposed in the light—imperfections we wish to keep hidden. Only light itself will not cast a shadow. And so it is with God.

There is no darkness in God. He is the source of light—the Father of lights. There is no part of Him that is not consistent with the rest of Him. There is no imperfection to create a shadow or variance. God's nature has not nor will ever change. He is immutable. The same God who breathed creation into existence is the same God who breathes life into our lungs. His gifts are always good and always perfect. We can rest assured in knowing that neither His goodness, His lovingkindness, nor His faithfulness ever waxes or wanes. Today, let the first verse of one of my favorite hymns aid us in our reflection of God's unchanging nature.

*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.*

### PRAY TODAY

Father, thank you for your unchanging nature. I trust you, Lord. You will never fail me. Your promises are guaranteed. You gifts are always perfect. You are worthy of praise, for you never change.

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

— **HEBREWS 13:8** —

Same. One very small but powerful word. Same, as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is being one without addition, change, or discontinuance: Identical. In a world where everything seems to be changing at an unusually fast rate of speed, it is wonderful to have one stable, unchanging thing we can rely on and that one thing, we are told by the author of Hebrews, is Jesus Christ himself!

When life throws uncertainty our way, Jesus Christ is the one thing that can be relied on, counted on, and trusted. We can rest assured in knowing that God is constant, and unchanging. His nature is a cornerstone for our trust in him. God longs for and desires for us to put our faith and trust in Him. The Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry summarizes this verse perfectly by stating, “Though the world changes, circumstances change, people change, and you change, Jesus never does.”

Wow! What an amazing blessing this is. Life is full of change. However, amid all this change, we are reminded that Jesus remains the same. The fact that Jesus is identical today to who he was yesterday and will be tomorrow provides a strength and a joy that nothing can take away.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Dear Jesus, I pray that this one single verse would lend itself as a source of encouragement when one of your children is feeling uncertain about some change taking place in their life. I pray that these words would be a constant reminder of your astounding love and grace for each and every one of us.

*For nothing will be impossible with God.*

— LUKE 1:37 —

God is all about the impossible. From the beginning as God was creating, He literally spoke everything into being. Out of nothing, God in His infinite power and wisdom created all that is seen and unseen, known and unknown. Creation, without God, is an absolute impossibility. Throughout the Old Testament, God continued to work through the impossible: God allowed Abraham and Sarah to have children well past child bearing years, God divided the Red Sea to allow passage for the Israelites, He caused the earth to remain still and stop rotating to provide extended daylight for Joshua and the Israelites to conquer the Amorites, and God spoke through a donkey to get Balaam's attention, to name a few. In the New Testament, it would seem impossible a virgin would supernaturally conceive and give birth to the savior of the world, and the grand finale in the world of impossibility, God raised Jesus Christ from the grave in glorified form never again to die that we might have eternal life in Him through faith.

As we reflect on this truth, let us remember the God of creation who loves us deeply and passionately, the God who out of this great love made a way for us to be saved from the consequences of our sin. As we endeavor to follow Jesus and honor Him with our lives, do we fully believe that there truly is nothing impossible with God? Does the way we live our lives reflect our full confidence in God, that with Him all things are possible?

### **PRAY TODAY**

Lord, there is nothing impossible with you. There is no thing you are not able to do. Help me to trust you more, God.

*For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.*

— **PSALM 33:9** —

From the smallest cell to the great expanse of space God created it all. He spoke it into being. Even the creation of time itself was created in that moment. He told it to exist and it did. He thought the complexity of creation then ordered it into existence. It is incredible that God could create everything we understand about science and nature with His thoughts and His spoken word. What is even more incredible is that a God so vastly superior to us could care about each one of us. As beings in the giant cosmos the idea that we could have value and uniqueness in God's sight is hard to imagine.

God's power and love should be a comfort to us. It should help us live in a way that trusts Him implicitly. When we dwell on the idea that He is all powerful we see how little we truly understand of the world. Our understanding is extremely limited. When we are faced with difficult decisions in life, are we asking God what we should be doing or how we should act? Do we move forward in our own confidence and ability or do we really inform our decision with the guidance of the omnipotent God. Trust that He knows best. Out of His infinite knowledge He has set aside the best way for us to live. Today, when you are confronted with challenging situations, take a deep breath and realize that in His infinite wisdom he has given you the knowledge of how to best to deal with those situations.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Almighty God, your very breath carries the power of all creation. All that exists because of you. Father, let that truth spring forth comfort and peace in me as I trust you all the more.

*Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.*

— **PSALM 139:4** —

I'd lose track of trying to recount all the personal assessments I've taken over the years to better understand myself. Personality typing inventories, StrengthsFinder, Enneagram numbers, and even tools that involve colors and animals have been utilized by organizations to help individuals and teams learn more about themselves and how they interact with one another. It seems strange, that the one person I should be an expert on, I know so little about! When I struggle to understand my own motives, behaviors or feelings where can I turn?

I am thankful that I can turn to the One who made me. The One who knows me inside and out, knows the number of hairs on my head and all the days ordained for me. What joy and comfort it brings me to know that the One who knows me "full well" knows every trial I'll face today and every day after. Nothing catches Him by surprise and I can trust that He will sustain me through it all.

Even beyond His intimate knowledge of me, I believe in a God who stands outside of time and knows all things past, present and future. When I am rattled, shaken or surprised by the world around me, I am thankful that I can call upon the One who is never taken by surprise. He is my Rock and my Redeemer.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, you know me better than I could ever know myself. My thoughts, my words, even all of my tomorrows, you know them altogether. You are never surprised. So today, Lord, let me find hope and peace in that truth.

*And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

— **HEBREWS 4:13** —

I once told a class that if we aren't a little afraid of God, then that god is not big enough. With mixed responses, the point was received. God knows everything. I don't know about you, but if God knows everything about me, that scares me a little. We are all broken. In groups and as individuals, we all carry around the baggage of so many mistakes. How can anyone possibly care for me when they know all of that! But here is the kicker, God does. He knows everything about you—even more than you do—and yet He still loves you more than you love yourself.

The omniscience of God goes beyond knowing the number of hairs on your head; it extends beyond knowing the vastness that is our universe and all that it holds. His wisdom allowed for all that is to have being and to flourish. Only a God that knows all things could create the vast destructive beauty of a black hole and at the same time know how to make puppy dog tails.

But even crazier is the intimacy of this knowledge when it comes to you and me. God knows everything about you, literally everything. Every thought, notion, every crazy dream—everything. And only God knows this, no other heavenly being can read your mind. This is good news! Because another attribute of God is His perfect grace through Jesus, so that He loves you wholly even though he knows everything about you. Praise God for His wondrous knowledge!

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, though you know every detail of my life, you love me all the same. Thank you for your unconditional love—a love I don't deserve.



An aerial photograph of a valley at sunset. The sky is a deep orange and yellow, with soft clouds. The valley below is filled with green trees and some buildings, with mountains visible in the distance. The text "I Am" is written in a white, brush-stroke font in the center of the image.

*I Am*

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

*“Am I a God at hand,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away?  
Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?”  
declares the LORD. “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD.*

— **JEREMIAH 23:23-24** —

In May of 2007, our daughter was diagnosed with ITP, an autoimmune blood disorder causing low levels of platelets in the blood. Since this diagnosis, we prayed for God’s healing without much improvement in that first year. Well, in early 2008 in the pool area of the Plaza Hotel in Colorado Springs, God showed up in a way I had never experienced up to that point, nor have I experienced since. As I was praying during my quiet time, His presence became so overwhelming that I truly couldn’t think or speak. All I could do was just be still and recognize He was there. After some time of just being still, I was finally able to ask the Father a one word question, “What?” His presence was so strong and recognizable that what He spoke to me may as well have been audible. The Lord said to me, “Start thanking me for Caryssa’s healing because I’ve got her taken care of.” I have thanked God for her healing ever since that day.

You may be wondering if Caryssa was ever healed. Come find me and I will tell you, but her healing was not the point. God was there! His presence was incredibly overwhelming and I’ve never sensed it more powerfully than on that day. I have never felt so safe in my life. My heavenly Father was that day and every day my refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble as the psalmist says. Today, may you know with confidence the truth from the book of Jeremiah that God is truly at hand and He is never far away.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, I know you are here. Let me be more aware of your presence wherever I am. Manifest yourself here in this place with me.

*Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee  
from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*

— **PSALM 139:7-8** —

God is everywhere, at all times. There is no hiding from Him. No matter where you go, He is there. Everything you do is seen by God. Every good deed you perform as well as every despicable thing you do is seen by God. Now that is a scary thought. But, even though God knows every good and bad thing about you, He stills loves you. He is not just simply there. He is there for you.

In the first six verses of this psalm, David starts by pondering the truth of God’s knowledge before moving to his omnipresence:

“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. 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. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.”

It’s only natural that David would tie these attributes together in one beautiful psalm, because it is impossible to separate God’s omniscience from His omnipresence. There is nothing God doesn’t know, because there is no place that God is not—including the past, present and future. Let’s worship that God today.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Lord, there is no place I can go to escape your presence. O how great and wonderful that is to me! I long to be near you. Today, Father, help me to walk in your light, that nothing would be hidden.

*That they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.*

— **ACTS 17:27** —

When we moved into our new house, I installed a Ring doorbell. You know what I am talking about. The doorbell that is also a security camera. Of course, it is great for those “porch pirates” around the holidays but it has also added an unexpected blessing in my daily life. When I am away at the office my boys will often run around on the front porch with full knowledge that my cell phone is alerting me of their presence. Often, I just snooze the notifications from the doorbell, but every once in a while, I play the game they are wanting to play. And what is that game? I just talk to them! They can’t see me, but I have a clear HD image of them both. But they can hear me and their response to my voice is instant joy. This reminds them, in a worldly way, that even though Dad is away, he is still present.

Yes, our Father is in Heaven, in his place of power and authority, and that often makes him feel distant. But we must remember Jesus teaches us to ask for “our daily bread” which brings him near.

Today, as we approach God, let’s remind ourselves that God is the One in whom “I live and move and exist” (Acts 17:28). This alone can help focus our minds on the utter nearness of God...He is actually not far from each one of us.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, you are never far from me. No matter how distant I may feel, you are always right there. Help me to remember your nearness, Lord. Lead me to turn to you in every circumstance, to live in your nearness, to abide in you.

*And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

— **COLOSSIANS 1:17** —

When I was a senior in college, my parents took our whole family on a 9-day, Alaskan cruise. There are many things that I can't remember about that trip, but there are several that I will never forget. I remember being overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the Alaskan landscape along with the crisp freshness of the air. I remember marveling at the large quantity of bald eagles that flew freely, majestically, and often around our ship and past our cabin balcony.

Of all the great moments of that trip that I remember, the greatest is one that I have never gotten over. One day we were out at sea and I went up on the top deck of the ship and spent hours just staring out at the ocean. There was nothing but water on all sides, as far as the eye could see. My intention had been to spend that time in worship, thanking God for his masterful creation when all of the sudden another feeling completely overwhelmed me: utter insignificance. I had never felt so small. Here before me was a seemingly endless sea but what was washing over me in that moment was the reality of a literally endless God. A God who "holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains." Psalm 95:4. It's the terrible and wonderful truth about our great God. He doesn't have a beginning or an end. He just is. Forever. And that is a God that is easy to hand your life to.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, in you all things hold together. You are the sustainer of all creation. You are the glue that binds the universe. Your invisible hand guides all that is. Guide me in your ways, lead me to you, Lord.

*I know that you can do all things, and that  
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.*

— **JOB 42:2** —

After all the trials, after all the friendly advice, after a season of questioning God, it is fitting that Job comes to this conclusion. The natural consequence of God's power always leads to a fearful enunciation of His absolute sovereignty. Even after all of the difficulties hurled upon Job, this indisputable and powerful trait produces an elaborate assertion of repentance which ultimately leads to a place of divine peace in Job.

This is still as true today as it ever was. God is sovereign over absolutely everything. There is nothing not subject to His power. There is no shadow in creation He does not reign over. He is never left helpless and never defeated. No situation brings the Almighty to a cold and fearful shudder. He does not tremble at the voice of any enemy; He does not wince at the future He holds in His very hands. The kings and kingdoms of all history cannot unite together to invoke trepidation within the Divine Wonder. He is over all!

It is this unfathomable and unhindered God who has extended an invitation to us to be a part of His kingdom! It is this almighty Father who has called us sons and daughters! We have been given the unique and glorious privilege of coming to Him directly when we encounter things in this life which are overwhelming. What is there in your life which needs to yield to His sovereignty? How much better is the Father's understanding than ours!

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, you are over all things. Nothing can stand against you. Today, O Lord, I submit to you. I give myself to your sovereign lead.

*He changes times and seasons; he removes kings  
and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and  
knowledge to those who have understanding.*

— DANIEL 2:21 —

We don't control God. I know that you know this, but do you really know this? Often when we pray, our prayers venture into the realm of using God as a vending machine for blessings, rather than as a time for us to submit to the will of the Lord of all things. Obviously we don't mean to do this, but it happens, and often without us even being aware. But wait, so God controls all things, but still wants us to ask him for stuff? I don't get it! Well there's hope, because no one does! Well not fully anyway. But we can certainly learn from God's Word together, so let's unpack some verses.

In Daniel 3, Daniel and his friends pray for wisdom and that night the Lord grants Daniel a vision to explain the king's dream and effectively save the lives of thousands. Daniel then acknowledges that only God has the power to grant the wisdom he sought. Daniel is thankful for the fact that God was merciful and provided him with what he needed, but only a chapter later we see the Daniel's friends acknowledge the reality that God does not have to do what they say. That even if they are burned alive in the fiery furnace, God is good!

Thus even just these two chapters show that God is able to do as He pleases. And while this may seem calloused and unfair to an outside observer, this is exactly what we need. Only a sovereign God can know what is best for us and not simply give us what we want. He instead grants us Himself and leads us to know that this is enough.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Lord, there is nothing not subject to you. Even in the hard times, when things are not how I want them to be, I will submit to you.

An aerial photograph of a vineyard at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow over the landscape. The vineyard rows are visible in the foreground, leading towards a small town or village nestled in a valley. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under a hazy sky. The text 'I Am' is written in a large, white, cursive font across the center of the image.

*I Am*

THE VINE



*This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true;  
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.*

— **PSALM 18:30** —

Psalm 18 is David's psalm of thanksgiving as he finally ascends to the throne after years of struggle with and flight from Saul. David is finally king. This psalm attributes his ascension to the throne to God, and in verse 30 he declares that the way of God is perfect.

In verses 1-2 of the psalm David declares, "I love you, LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

Think about your life and how God has proven himself perfect as He has been your strength, rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, horn of salvation and stronghold. Give thanks for God's perfect way in your life.

Deuteronomy 32:4 also speaks of this perfect God when it says, "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he."

Even though you do not understand all the circumstances of your life, pause and thank God that His works are perfect and just. And that He is a faithful God who does no wrong. He is upright. He is just.

### **PRAY TODAY**

God, you are perfect in all of your ways. There is no blemish, no accusation, no complaint with merit against you, Lord. I can trust you in all things, for you never fail—because you are perfect.

*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

— **MATTHEW 5:48** —

Nowhere in the scriptures, except here, is God described as perfect. His wisdom, His works, His ways, His word, and His will are all described as perfect, but here, God Himself is revealed as perfect. Perfection is understood in the Bible as without fault, complete, and without shortcoming. Jesus is also described as perfect—morally sinless, and able to serve as the spotless Lamb of God sacrificed on our behalf. God is perfect by nature, and everything about Him is perfect. And we are told as children of God to be perfect, as He is.

This command to perfection means at least two things. First, it can be understood morally. We are to be as morally blameless as God is. The good news for sinners like us is that we can become perfect through Christ, who already accomplished this for us. His death removed our sin and His sinless life is credited to our account.

Also, it can be understood relationally. Verse 48 is embedded in a passage pertaining to relationships with nonbelievers. It is about loving enemies, praying for those who persecute, and loving when it is not deserved. Matthew observes that even pagans love those who are loving and deserving. But true children of the perfect Father love as the Father loves—unconditionally. We are being conformed to the image of His perfect Son. We are positionally perfect in righteousness, and are becoming perfected in love. With every passing year, we look more and more like Dad. Right?

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, none can measure up to your perfect standard. But you gave me a way to be perfect through Christ. Thank you, Lord.

*Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?*

— **EXODUS 15:11** —

While this verse is written in question-format, the author of Exodus is not looking for the reader to give his/her personal opinion; instead he is aiming to make the Israelites pause and reflect upon all that God has done for them up to this point. He desires to extol God's character and therefore, writes in a manner so as to bring praise to God's attributes; using words such as: majestic, holy, awesome and glorious. Moses is trying to make the point that God is unique; that there has never been anyone like Him before.

What's amazing about this verse is that it is still true today! God is worthy of our praise because it is He who continues to work in the lives of His people. He has proven Himself greater than all other gods. No other idol that we create can compare to the wonder and majesty of Christ. He is worthy of our complete and total devotion "for the Lord our God is holy" (Psalm 99:9b).

The Israelites got to witness firsthand the wonders of God's power and grace. Where they had previously felt threatened by sin and death, God intervened and became their salvation. We too should sing praises to God thanking Him for His matchless perfection, grace, and love for us.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Lord, I pray that you would help me to not lose sight of how awesome and glorious you really are. Thank you for providing me with the free gift of salvation through your son, Jesus. Remind me often to praise your holy name, for you alone are worthy of my praise and worship!

*And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

— **ISAIAH 6:3** —

Here in the beginning verses of Isaiah 6, we are given an outline to worship—though few may realize it. Through a vision, God shows Isaiah how He wants to be worshiped. In the vision, Isaiah sees angels flying around the heavenly throne calling out praises to God and exclaiming His holiness and power. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord,” declare the seraphim. The very doors of the temple shake at the power of their declaration, and Isaiah is dismayed as he finds himself—a sinner—enveloped in the Shekinah glory of the Lord. But the angels settle him as they purge his lips with coals preparing him then to accept his mission from God.

When we approach our Heavenly Father in prayer or worship, it is imperative to begin that time by expressing in thoughts, words or song our proclamations of His power, goodness, surpassing greatness and holiness. So many times, we begin our prayer time asking the Lord for things rather than proclaiming to Him what an awesome God He is, and so we miss the true purpose of that time.

It is only after this time of praise and adoration that we are truly able to confess our sins to Him, accept His absolution and give thanks for all He has done in our lives. Only after we recognize and celebrate His position, His holiness, His almighty nature are we then ready to go out into the world to do His service.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Almighty God, you are truly holy. There is none like you, Lord. You are above all heaven and earth. You are worthy of all praise, glory and honor. To you, O Lord, I set my heart—above all else.

*You are good and do good; teach me your statutes*

— **PSALM 119:68** —

God is inherently good. All the good of this world stems from Him. He did not receive goodness from another source. When we look at creation we can see His goodness. All the good that we see and that we are originates from God. It is because of this that He has compassion on all of us and sent His Son. We cannot earn His goodness.

God gives us the perfect model of goodness. The more we know God and learn about Him, the more we can work to be like Him. Through knowing Him we can strive to be better every day. By knowing Him we also understand how God works for His good purposes. Like a good father, He desires the best for us. As we trust him more and develop our relationship with Him, we are drawn closer to Him. As we trust in God more and more, we can also feel safe knowing that God is unchanging. God will always be good.

It is because of his good nature that he provided His Son for our salvation. We can see His goodness all around us. Our faith is based on it. Often we forget about it. We miss it in all of the many small ways we can see it around us each day. We need to be aware and spot His goodness and be grateful for the many ways God provides for us each day. As we see His goodness more and more, we should seek to reflect that good to the world around us. How can you be a reflection of God's goodness today?

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, today let me be more aware of your goodness. Open my eyes to your wonderful works around me. Leave me in awe of you, Lord.

*Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!  
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!*

— **PSALM 34:8** —

I'm not the fastest learner. Never have been. In fact, I'm usually one that has to be told something several times before I finally have the "light bulb" moment and everything clicks. But there is one thing I have never failed in understanding. If someone tells me there is good food that I need to try, I'm first in line with a fork ready. I love food, and I'll try anything once, so if you're telling me it's good then bring me a plate and let's do this.

This is what I love about this psalm. It's the best food review ever. The psalmist is shouting from the mountaintops, writing the best Yelp review, preaching from the buffet line saying "you just think you've had good food. I know you've tried selfishness, pride, lust, and greed. I know these things might taste pretty good initially, but they never satisfy. So come here, load up your plate with this, and trust me after tasting it you will never want to eat anything else!"

There is a lyric from a Shane and Shane song that is particularly fitting for this passage that says, "I delight my soul in the richest of fare, trading all that I have for all that is better. A garment of praise for my heaviness, You are the greatest taste, You're the richest of fare."

Today, may we feast on the One who is truly good.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Lord, my soul yearns for more of your goodness. Let me taste and see the infinite wonder of how good you are. Father, I want to be overwhelmed with your good nature. I want to feast on you alone.

An aerial photograph of a valley at sunset. The sky is a deep orange and yellow, with soft clouds. The valley below is filled with green trees and some buildings, with mountains visible in the distance. The text "I Am" is written in a white, brush-stroke font across the middle of the image.

*I Am*

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

*“For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?”*

— **ROMANS 11:34** —

Nothing has been more sanctifying in my personal life than being a father to my two little girls—watching them grow, seeing their personalities blossom, and having to allow the Lord to lead me in correcting them when their sin nature leads to destructive behavior. One of the most fascinating things that I have observed is this natural (because of a bent towards sin, not because of God’s design) inclination to defy—this seemingly innate desire to go against words of caution. The simple direction of “Don’t do that, you’ll get hurt,” almost instantly turns into a defiant challenge. It’s like I can see my daughter thinking “Whatever Pops, I’m going to do it my way.” And then she does, and the injury follows.

This scenario plays out every day, in every person, with every situation. There is a lot to be said in scripture of wisdom. Proverbs 1 tells of how “wisdom cries aloud from the streets” and that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” 1 Corinthians 1:25 says, “the foolishness of God is wiser than men.”

A wonderful part of fatherhood has been that my girls have started realizing that I’m always for their good. When I say “no,” it is always because I have a “yes” to something better. And how much more is this true of our Heavenly Father? When we finally see that the Lord is always for our good, we are then free to release any illusion of control that we have and bask in the wisdom of our great God.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, who could ever be your counselor? You are wise beyond all creation. Today Lord, help me lean on your infinite understanding.



*Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;  
his understanding is beyond measure.*

— **PSALM 147:5** —

Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him.

Why? That is a question sometimes in our lives that we ask. As we look headfirst into our daily lives of stress, problems and constant disruptions, we often wonder what good is God doing. Is He really looking out for us? Is He really concerned with the daily needs we have in our lives?

Many times, we don't feel that He does. But if we are able to look at the big picture, we can see that God really cares for every detail in our daily living and wants to bless us at every turn. We have so much to owe our Heavenly Father in gratitude—for sustaining us through trials, walking with us in heartache, caring for us in every way through life's challenges, and more. He gives us beautiful hope in the future. He gives us wonderful blessings that are totally unseen. He takes our sorrows and turns them into wonderful acts of grace and mercy.

Psalm 147 is a wonderful chapter to dwell upon reminding us of His everlasting love and care. We are never alone and always in the arms of our creator who loves us so. Today, reflect on His infinite wisdom and bask in the glorious good that is His nature.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, your wisdom is beyond measure. Your ways are higher than mine, for your wisdom is greater than mine. Reveal the limits of my own wisdom, Lord, that I might trust you more today.

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.*

— **PSALM 97:2** —

Have you ever wondered why the psalmist says that justice is the foundation of God's throne. Why not grace, or mercy, or any other of God's benevolent attributes? What about love? Isn't love the source of all that God has done in history? What about His omnipotence? Is not His power displayed in miraculous ways throughout all of scripture? Why is God's power not the foundation of his throne? That would make more sense. The foundation of any kingdom needs to be strong in order to be solid and secure.

As we study the Psalms, we see a trend. Bruce Waltke notes that thirty-five of the Petition Psalms are pleas asking God to intervene against all the sinful acts committed by the ungodly. There is clearly a righteous indignation against the injustices they saw in their own lives. The psalmists would rather take their pain and suffering caused by others to God than to take matters into their own hands.

What about us? I believe that sometimes we are like the little girl that sent a letter to God in the book, *Children's Letters to God*: "Did you really mean do unto others as they do unto you, because if you did then I'm going to fix my brother." What do you do when you are wronged and hurt by others? Are you tempted to take matters into your own hands? Do you allow your emotions to get the best of you and allow bitterness to creep into your life? Why not trust the righteous King who has justice as the foundation of His throne?

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, you are just and you demand justice. You alone are the sovereign judge. I look to you and you only for justice to be served.

*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** —

Sometimes, especially during trials and heartache, we have a tendency to look to God and ask the questions: “God am I good enough? Can you really forgive me?” These are questions we sometimes ask; however, God’s Word provides us peace in our circumstances. In Deuteronomy 32, we read that His work is perfect, for all of His ways are just. God does no wrong. He is perfectly just and will never go back on His promises. Take comfort in this. God is just and will follow through with all of His promises.

How do you view God’s justice? All His ways are perfect. But, do you believe this? Sometimes we try to blame God for bad things in our lives; only believing He is just and perfect when our lives are perfect, but this is a dangerous belief. It is clear in scripture God is unchanging. Our feelings are constantly changing, but God remains constant. C.S. Lewis once said, “though our feelings come and go, God’s love for us does not.”

We will not always feel or understand God’s justice, but we can rest in the fact that He is faithful and just. He is just and will forgive you of all of your sins. He is just and will not go back on His promises to you. How can you today walk in confidence that God is just and has the power to forgive us of all unrighteousness? Is there a part of your life you do not think He can forgive? Spend time right now confessing your sins to Him, for He is faithful and just.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Lord, all your ways are just. You are faithful and upright in all that you do. Build my faith, Father, on the rock of your just promises.

*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.*

— **PSALM 145:8-9** —

I am forever grateful for God's grace to me, giving me what I do not deserve. However, I am more grateful for His abundant mercy, not giving me what I do deserve.

Because of my sin, I deserved to be stripped bare and have someone use a cat-of-nine tails on me, ripping my skin, my muscles and my ligaments from my bones. Because of my sin, I deserved to have large muscular soldiers punch me in the face until my eyes were so swollen I could barely see. Because of my sin, I deserved to have those same men pull out my beard in clumps and to have the foul stench of their spittle run into those oozing sores. Because of my sin, I deserved to have huge spikes driven through my quivering hands and feet into large pieces of wood. Because of my sin, I deserved to have my body shake with anguish as that main beam jolted into place with my hands and feet attached. Because of my sin, I deserved to thirst and bleed, and eventually die on that cross. Because of my sin, I deserved to be separated from God. Because of my sin, I deserved to go to hell.

But God, who did not want to give me what I deserved, took that pain, that shame and that death I deserved, and put it on Jesus so I could live with Him forever. I am so grateful for His mercy! Today, let us reflect on the wonderful mercy afforded to us in the sacrifice of the cross.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Lord, I do not deserve you. I could never earn your mercy, but you freely give it anyways. Thank you Father, for who you are to me.

*But 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** —

All of us at one time or another have had to show mercy to someone who hurt us or did us wrong. Or maybe a friend or family member has had to show you mercy for your hurtful words or actions. The definition of mercy is to show compassion or forgiveness toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.

As most of you know, this passage starts with my favorite phrase in all of scripture, "But God." If it were not for God and His great mercy, we would all be in a lot of trouble. But because of His great mercy, God expects us to demonstrate His mercy and love to others.

Romans 3:23 tells us that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have all made mistakes and messed up. Therefore, we have no choice but to show mercy to others if we expect the same from God. James 2:13 says, "For judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment." All of us will stand before God on Judgment Day and be held accountable for our actions. James goes on to say "The person who shows mercy can stand without fear on the judgment day."

Rick Warren says, "Mercy changes the lives of people who have made mistakes, and we who have received mercy freely can change the world around us by showing mercy to others." Today, is there someone you need to extend mercy to? Will you?

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, thank you for showing me mercy. Open my eyes today, Lord, to those I need to extend your mercy towards.

An aerial photograph of a valley at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, golden light, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a hazy atmosphere. The valley below is filled with dense green trees and some buildings. In the distance, there are rolling hills and mountains. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

*I Am*

THE GATE

*And from his fullness we have all received,  
grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses;  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

— **JOHN 1:16-17** —

In chapter 1, John takes us back to the beginning where Christ is revealed as the eternal Creator of all things, and as creation's hope for redemption. All the fullness and glory of God was made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. In verses 14-16, John describes the glorious fullness of God indwelling Jesus with six important attributes: grace, truth, grace, grace, grace and truth. It couldn't be any more clear. Jesus is not only the Truth, but in Him, we see with crystal clarity that God is gracious.

Too often, we have difficulty reconciling grace and truth. To increase one, it would seem the other must decrease. Not so with God. He is not just a balance of grace and truth (even someone who is 15% truthful and 15% gracious would have balance). John is explaining that God Himself is full of both grace and truth. God's graciousness is perfectly truthful and His truth is perfectly gracious.

Grace and truth are expressed together in God's acceptance and God's refining. Although all have transgressed the law, grace welcomes and accepts. We are reconciled to God in an initial act of saving grace. It was the joy of Jesus to pay the price that truth demanded to accept us in grace. We also see that God is tenaciously committed to refining our devotion to Christ as he readies us for our home-going. But in His zeal for our refining, we experience the patience, kindness, and love of God that we'll never deserve.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, thank you for your eternal grace. Though I fail continually, you never give up on me. Walk with me every step, O Lord.

*But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.*

— **ROMANS 5:15** —

I recently heard a catchy version of Amazing Grace, a song we all know and probably love. The start of the song grabbed my attention as the musician played a uniquely different riff on the acoustic guitar. But I was caught off guard by the first line: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a soul like me.” Hold on one minute. I have always believed and resonated with the term wretch. Why change it? Well, the artist thought it was demeaning to human beings.

The original author, John Newton was an immoral slave trader and a liar. He knew he was a wretch and deeply understood the depth of his sin. This understanding clearly revealed the fact that God's grace is amazing.

The grace of God doesn't allow us to ignore the awfulness of our sin. In fact, it emphasizes the depth of it even more, by reminding us of the price paid to redeem us from it. Christ's death has a purpose (Gal 2:21).

Today, may we come to grips with the reality of our sin and the graciousness of God. Remember, Jesus Christ did not just cancel the effects of Adam's sin, but he provided more than Adam lost or even possessed before the fall, namely, the righteousness of God! This is the free gift of grace.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Lord, your grace is overwhelming. I do not deserve the sacrifice of Jesus, yet you freely give it anyway. I stand in awe of who you are.



*But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you  
and guard you against the evil one.*

— **2 THESSALONIANS 3:3** —

I wish I could say, “If God is for me I will never experience difficulty.” But the truth is life is difficult! God reassures us in scripture that He will never leave us nor forsake us, but He never promises us that difficulty will not come our way. As long as there is an evil one declaring war against God’s people, we must always be ready to fight the good fight.

In Judges 7, we read about the nation of Israel going into battle against the Midianites and Amalekites. Scripture said the enemy were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand of the sea. But God took 300 men with torches and empty pitchers to defeat the enemy.

In 1 Samuel 17, the Philistines gathered their armies against Israel. Everyday a champion named Goliath came out and taunted the nation of Israel and their God. But God raised up a young shepherd boy named David who would accept the challenge. In the strength of the Lord, David said, “This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you... so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” That day God defeated Goliath and all the Philistines.

How big is your God? Is He not faithful and able to deliver you from the struggles of this world?

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, your word is true. You are faithful, Lord. Your promises are assured and I will lean on them with all that I have. I trust you, God.

*If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.*

— 2 TIMOTHY 2:13 —

No matter how hard I try, I cannot be completely faithful. I am a human. I fail. I wind up thinking about number one—me! God, on the other hand, can be completely trusted 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Why? Because He is God! And why does the scripture say He remains faithful and then concludes that sentence with “for he cannot deny himself?” When we read the Old Testament we see that the Holy Spirit would come upon certain individuals for certain tasks. He gave each person strength or wisdom or understanding to do what He needed them to do.

However, when we are saved, a marvelous miracle occurs. God, the very Creator of the universe, comes to live in each one of us in the form of the Holy Spirit. We are told that the Holy Spirit in us is a guarantee that God will complete His work to the very end. We are sealed in Him and no one can break that seal. We are clothed in His righteousness. When God sees us, He doesn’t see our failures, our unfaithfulness, our sin; He sees His only Son Jesus—Christ in you, the hope of glory. God the Father is faithful, God the Son is faithful and God the Holy Spirit is faithful, and they remain faithful to each other—even to God who lives in you!

Today, reflect on the nature of God’s faithfulness. How should your life be shaped by the truth that He will always be faithful to His word and promises?

### **PRAY TODAY**

Holy Lord, you are forever faithful. Thank you, God, for your enduring faithfulness even when I turn away from your truth.

*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** —

Love is a word that is used in so many ways and with different degrees of intensity. I love ice cream! Yum! I love my dog! I love my family! I love my spouse! Do we love all these things in the very same way? I truly hope that we do not. We are in trouble if we love our spouse the same way we love ice cream or even our dog.

Agape love (God’s kind of love) demonstrates itself in action. This type of true and genuine love is summed up in our verse for today. “God...loved us and sent his Son...” Though God feels deeply about us, the feeling alone was not enough. God put that feeling into action—even when we did not deserve it.

Romans 5:8 says: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Despite our unworthiness God gave his most precious possession, Jesus—His one and only Son, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Not only did God send Jesus to die to bring forgiveness for sin, He also sent Him to die so that whoever would believe might be adopted into God’s family and become the children of this loving God. Oh, how he loves us!

Let’s rejoice and give thanks today because we can call this loving God our Father!

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father in heaven, thank you for loving not only in word but in action as well. You loved me enough to act on my behalf. An act I can never earn or repay. You fill me with awe and wonder, O Lord.

*Greater love has no one than this,  
that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

— **JOHN 15:13** —

Sacrifice is the hallmark characteristic of the deepest love. With this in mind, some have described love as cross-shaped. Paul Tripp defines cruciform love with four features: willing self-sacrifice, for the good of another, without being deserved, or demanding repayment. Regardless of the definition used, Jesus taught and demonstrated that true love is costly.

Why does God love you? Like me, you have transgressed God's law, audaciously displaced Jesus on the throne of your life, worshiped created things before the Creator, and have fashioned countless replacements with which to be unfaithful to God. Why would God love rebellious, sinful enemies? The answer is that God values us. How much? In 1933, the gold double-eagle coin was worth \$20, 70 years later, it was sold at auction for \$7.9 million. How much was the coin worth? It was worth the price the bidder was willing to pay.

Our worth is neither earned nor deserved. Our value is the price God was willing to pay for us. Jesus didn't have to leave His heavenly glory to redeem us. He didn't have to daily live in perfect observance of the law to qualify as a perfect sacrifice. And in the hour of His anguish, He didn't have to lay down His life for our sin. But He did, because He loves us. You are worth what He was willing to pay for you. When you are tempted to hide from God, remember the price He paid for you. There is no greater love than God's.

### **PRAY TODAY**

Father, thank you for the unwarranted outpouring of your love. There is no measure greater than what you have given. Thank you.



*I Am*

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

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 **FIRST BAPTIST**  
BRYAN