



HEAVEN

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

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If we're not careful, it's easy to build our lives around good things—and still miss the most important thing. Our focus drifts quickly. We get busy, distracted, even spiritually active, yet we can slowly move Jesus from the center of our lives to the background. This devotional is an invitation to bring Him back where He belongs.

Over the next nine weeks, you'll walk through themes that shape both our present lives and our eternal hope—truths about heaven, judgment, prayer, relationships, mission and what lasts forever.

This journey isn't about gaining more information—it's about realignment. It's about seeing life through the lens of eternity and learning to live with Jesus at the center of everything: our decisions, our priorities, our relationships and our church. Because when Jesus is central, everything else finds its proper place.

My prayer is that these weeks will help you slow down, listen closely and respond courageously. That you would not just think more about heaven, but live more for Christ.

Let's begin this journey—together, with Jesus at the center.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a horizontal line and a large, stylized 'J'.

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DAILY PRAYER AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

"... Our Father in heaven..."

Matthew 6:9b (NLT)

- **What do You want to say to me today as my Father?**

"... may your name be kept holy."

Matthew 6:9c (NLT)

- **What do You want to reveal to me about Your power today?**

"May your Kingdom come soon."

Matthew 6:10a (NLT)

- **Help me make Your priorities my priorities today.**

"Give us today the food we need,"

Matthew 6:11 (NLT)

- **Is there anything specific You want me to do with my time or the people I'm around today?**

"and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us"

Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

- **Reveal to me anyone I need to forgive or ask for forgiveness.**

"And don't let us yield to temptation..."

Matthew 6:13a (NLT)

- **Is there anywhere I'm vulnerable to temptation?**

A RADICAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE HOLINESS OF GOD

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."

Luke 5:8-10 (NIV)

In this calling of the first disciples, we see Jesus coming to the shore where Simon Peter, James and John were fishing and using one of the boats to teach the people. Jesus tells Simon Peter to let down the nets and fish, which he does, even though he hadn't caught any fish all the previous night. This was a leap of faith because of the work that the fishermen had done, which hadn't yielded a catch. You see here the belief that Simon Peter already had in Jesus. Once the catch was in, Simon Peter was so astonished as to feel unworthy of being with Jesus. Jesus still wanted these men to be His disciples and would be fishing for men.

When I was in the Navy, I was not a follower of Christ. I believed in Him, but wasn't saved. After I left the service, I began going to church with my wife, and that's where I met Jesus. He started stirring things in me, and then one Sunday it happened. There was an altar call, and I felt a push to go down front and give my life to Jesus. It wasn't an idea to go forward; I felt like a giant hand pushed me. This encounter brought me to Jesus. He was working on me the entire time, ready for me to take that step to meet Him in that wonderful encounter!

APPLICATION: We've all encountered God in some way in our lives. Spend a few minutes bringing a story to mind of that experience, and remember what it felt like. Write this all out in a journal and reflect on it. Ask God what He wants you to know from that moment.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for loving me and showing up in my life. Help me remember the times I met You and how You have been faithful to me. Your grace is truly sufficient. Amen.

GOD THE SUPREME JUDGE

*But the LORD reigns forever,
executing judgment from his throne.
He will judge the world with justice
and rule the nations with fairness.*

Psalms 9:7-8 (NLT)

I remember times when I was a young boy making bad choices. I knew what I was doing was wrong, but I did it anyway. In the back of my mind, I knew what my dad would do to me, but I didn't care. I wanted to do what I wanted, and nothing was going to stop me. As it so often happens, I was caught every time. I stood in absolute fear of what punishment I would receive. In my mind, I didn't want any punishments and tried to talk my way out of them. The punishments did come, and I deserved them all. I still felt like they were too harsh, and my dad wasn't being fair. In reality, he was fair. I learned that there were consequences to my actions.

Being a believer doesn't mean that we are free from earthly consequences for our actions. We are not being punished by God but rather dealing with the aftermath of our choices. I have met with those who feel God is punishing their families because they had done wrong. God wasn't punishing them, but they were dealing with earthly judgment.

Many people fear what God is going to do to them in eternal judgment because of their past deeds. This is an understandable emotion, because we are sinful by nature and know we deserve the consequences of our sins. But we have a wonderful hope that can sustain us. Jesus came to this earth, lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and was raised from the dead as the sacrifice for our sins. When we believe in Him, our sins are wiped clean, and we will be with Jesus in heaven. What a beautiful promise for us.

APPLICATION: Think about a time when you were worried or were in fear because of something that you did. How can you see God at work in that situation? As you go through your day, remember that God is faithful and that you can trust Him as you face future situations.

PRAYER: God, You are a wonderful and merciful God. Thank You for sending Jesus to earth for us. I am grateful that You are just and fair in judgment. Help me remember all that You have done in my life. Amen.

THE PERFECT JUSTICE OF GOD

*I will proclaim the name of the LORD.
Oh, praise the greatness of our God!
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.*

Deuteronomy 32:3-4 (NIV)

These verses are very clear about the nature and character of God. Our God truly is an awesome God. We know that His Creation and His ways are perfect. We are not worthy of this because of our sinful natures, but He loves us still and forgives our sins. This is something we need to share with others: there is a God we can lean on, who is fair and just.

Why do we need to share this? The enemy is at work through false teachers. There are those in our society today who question God's nature and try to twist His words. They take a verse or two out of context and make it say what they want. They have removed the justice from God and are trying to make people feel good about their sins and that God is accepting of them. This is not true, and we need to be aware of it. They want to change the character of God. We must guard our hearts with Scripture and prayer.

We also need to be prepared to speak the truth in love to people, helping them understand the love of God. He does love us and does judge us, but it is a fair and just judgment that we can trust in and rely on. God is the same then, now and in the future. He is truly a rock for us to lean on.

APPLICATION: Pray and ask God who you can speak into this week in a loving way. Spend time listening to Him and praying about how you can speak to that person. Have lunch or coffee with that person and share the love of God with them.

PRAYER: Dear God, Your justice is mighty and fair, and I'm grateful for You loving me throughout my life. Give me the strength to face struggles, knowing that You are with me at every step. Thank You for being my rock. Amen.

THERE'S NO ESCAPING JUSTICE

But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Hebrews 9:26b-28 (NIV)

Have you ever tried to outrun your problems? Have you schemed and planned ways to avoid getting caught for something and facing the consequences? I certainly have. In high school, my brother and I were not doing well in some of our classes and knew that our report cards would reflect that. We were worried about what our dad would say and what our punishment would be for bad grades. In our infinite wisdom, we found a way to change the grades. My brother became good at erasing and reshaping grades on our report cards so we would come off better. It worked for a while, but eventually we were discovered. We were trying to make our consequences go away, but all we did was postpone the inevitable. The punishment was greater because of the lies.

It can be like this with God. We don't want God to know the bad things that we've done, so we try to hide them. In a fruitless effort, we want to bury these things because we are ashamed of the sin that we have committed. The guilt and shame begin to eat at us, and we tend to dig ourselves deeper to try to hide. In the end, we cannot escape the judgment that is coming. The author of Hebrews says it perfectly that we'll all die and face judgment. No ifs, ands, or buts, it will happen to all of us. Paul says the same in 2 Corinthians 5:10. However, the verses in Hebrews offer us hope in Jesus, who came to take away our sins by sacrificing Himself for us. This sustains us when we feel we need to hide.

APPLICATION: Is there anything that you are currently hiding or running from? Confess that to God and ask His forgiveness. If there are others you need to seek forgiveness from, pray and do so. Bringing these into the light is always better than hiding them in the dark.

PRAYER: Father, help me to remember that I can trust You with all of my burdens. There is nothing too great for You to forgive. Thank You for loving me enough to forgive me of my sins. Amen.

JESUS ALONE CAN SAVE

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. **Acts 4:12 (NIV)**

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

1 Timothy 2:5-6a (NIV)

There are moments in life when we become painfully aware that we cannot fix ourselves. Believe me, I've spent years trying! We try to clean up our past, hide our guilt, or measure up spiritually—but deep down, something is still missing. Scripture speaks directly to that ache: salvation is not something we achieve; it's something we receive.

Acts 4:12 declares with clarity that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus. This can feel uncomfortable in a world full of options and opinions, yet it is deeply freeing. If salvation depended on us—our effort and consistency, our goodness—we would always live in uncertainty. Have we done enough? Are we good enough? These questions have left me with fear and regret. Jesus removes that burden by doing what we could never do.

1 Timothy 2:5 reminds me that Jesus is the one mediator between God and humanity. He stands in the gap I could never cross. My sin resulted in separation, but Jesus stepped in as a Savior who gave Himself for me. For you. He doesn't just show us the way; He is the way.

Then 1 John 5:11-12 brings it home: to have Jesus is to have life. This truth invites humility and rest—humility because we cannot save ourselves, and rest because we don't have to. Jesus alone is sufficient, fully and forever.

And that is very good news.

APPLICATION: Today, instead of striving, come to Him. Trust Him again. Lay down the quiet pressure to earn what has already been given. Salvation is not found in your strength, but in His finished work.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I confess that I cannot save myself, and I rest in the truth that You alone are enough. Thank You for standing in my place and giving me the gift of eternal life through Your finished work. Help me to trust You more deeply today and to live in the freedom and assurance that come from belonging to You. Amen.

THE BOOKS ARE OPENED

*“As I looked,
thrones were set in place,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat.
His clothing was as white as snow;
the hair of his head was white like wool.
His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.
A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.
Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
The court was seated,
and the books were opened.”*

Daniel 7:9-10 (NIV)

“But don’t rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.”

Luke 10:20 (NLT)

Daniel 7 gives us a breathtaking and sobering vision: thrones are set in place, the Ancient of Days takes His seat, and *the books are opened*. It’s a scene of perfect justice. Nothing is hidden. Every thought, word and deed is accounted for. It reminds us that history is not random and our lives are not overlooked—God sees, and God will judge with righteousness. Revelation 20:11-12 echoes this same moment. John describes the great white throne, where the dead stand before God, and the books are opened once again. People are judged according to what they have done. It is a weighty picture, one that humbles us. Left to ourselves, none of us could stand on that day. Our records would not justify us; they would expose our need.

But into that sobering reality comes a stunning word of hope from Luke 10:20. Jesus tells His disciples not to rejoice merely in spiritual power, but to rejoice that their names are written in heaven. There is another book—the Book of Life. And this changes everything.

For those who belong to Christ, the final judgment is not a moment of fear, but of assurance. Yes, the books are opened—but so is the book that bears our names, written not by our merit, but by His grace. This truth invites us to live with both reverence and joy. Reverence, because God is holy and just. Joy, because in Christ, our future is secure.

APPLICATION: Spend time today reflecting on how your story is known, your life matters, and if you are in Jesus, your name is already written where it counts most.

PRAYER: Lord, You see everything about me, and that’s both humbling and comforting. Thank You that because of Jesus, my name is written in the book of life—not because I earned it, but because You love me. Help me live today with a steady joy and a deep trust, knowing I belong to You. Amen.

LIVING FOR LOVE

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

I am a creature of habit. Every morning, I drive the same route to work, and I pull into the drive-thru of the same Starbucks. One morning, I began rattling off my order, but before I could finish my request for a latte with a double shot of peppermint syrup, the barista called me by name and said, *I know this order! Pull up to the window, and I'll have it ready for you!* She knew me. I didn't have to give the details of my drink order because she had heard it many times before, and she recognized the sound of my voice.

As I pulled away from the window, I wondered, what am I truly known for? My creative abilities, my personality, or my loyalty? While those are all details about me, they're not what I want people to think of first when they hear my name. I belong to Jesus, and my identity is rooted in Him. He said that people will know us by our love for each other. It is because of His perfect love for us that we can love others and point them to Him. Loving others is a call on the lives of all Christians, and a way of life on this side of heaven. Jesus promised that if we surrender our lives to Him, we will follow Him into eternity. The next time you show love to someone could be the moment that their eyes are unveiled to the love of Jesus.

APPLICATION: Read 1 Corinthians 13. As you read, take notice of the characteristics of love as defined by Scripture. How is this different from the world's view of love? Based on the passage, in what ways could you begin to show genuine love to others?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me perfectly. It is only because of Your sacrifice that I can love as You have commanded me to love. I need Your strength and guidance to show love to others so that my life can reflect You. Amen.

LIVING WITH THE END IN MIND

For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:7-10 (NIV)

Have you ever tried driving at 70 miles per hour down an interstate while wearing a blindfold? Of course not! You wouldn't make it very far before running off the road or crashing into another vehicle. Even with the most seasoned NASCAR driver behind the wheel, I don't have faith in anyone to safely control a vehicle in total darkness. How, then, are we to live by faith and not by sight? This doesn't mean we are to live recklessly; rather, Jesus asks us to trust Him and choose righteous living over sinful living. A Christian has no need to fear the road ahead because, although it's sometimes dark or unpredictable, God sees it, and He is in complete control. Living by faith means striving to be more like Jesus, even when our flesh is tempted. Until we are with Him in heaven, faith requires us to lay down our own understanding and trust Him. Pursuing righteous living over sinful living gives us an eternal perspective.

God takes notice of these efforts to trust Him and pursue righteousness. When we see Him face-to-face, He will reward us according to the lives we lived on earth. Scripture tells us in Psalms 16:11, *You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.* This isn't like investing money into a faith account to obtain mansions and crowns; it's our surrender to the King of Kings who will acknowledge our faithfulness to Him and continue to lavish us with His good and perfect gifts.

APPLICATION: What do you need to surrender to God to live by faith? Spend some time in reflection and ask God to reveal areas where He wants you to trust Him.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I need Your help to live a life that pleases You. I want to live with an eternal perspective so that I can strengthen my relationship with You now. Thank You for being patient with me and for loving me unconditionally. Amen.

A TASTE OF HEAVEN

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Revelation 7:9-10 (NIV)

I love people-watching. Whether sitting at a table in the food court at the mall and watching shoppers hustle by or floating in the neighborhood pool as a spectator of a nautical volleyball game, I like to imagine the lives of people I don't know. My favorite place to observe people is at concerts: their outfits, the excitement in their conversations, and the time they spend scrolling on their phones until the concert starts. Recently, I went to see one of my favorite Christian artists. Soon after the music began, I could sense the Holy Spirit settle in the massive auditorium. Postures shifted, hands raised, tears fell. Thousands of people lifted their voices in unified worship. All the differences that we carried into that space didn't matter. In that moment, I thought, *this is a glimpse of what heaven is like.*

The Bible is clear that we are to exalt the name of Jesus corporately. In this way, we are experiencing a taste of eternal worship. *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts* (Colossians 3:16 NIV). Did you notice there's no mention of ethnicities, yearly incomes or political affiliations? The things that tend to divide us fall away when we focus our attention on the One who is worthy of everything we have to give. He desires to *dwell* among us while we are here on earth- another glimpse of what heaven is like!

APPLICATION: Spend some intentional time today to worship. Whether through a song, a prayer or an act of kindness, invite the Lord to dwell with you.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, You are so good to us! Despite our sins and differences, we are unified through the love of Christ. Cultivate a heart of worship in me and help me to see people as You see them. Amen.

ARE YOU PREPARED?

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Colossians 2:6-7 (NIV)

Do you remember the fable about the ant and the grasshopper? The grasshopper spent his summer days relaxing in the sun, napping and entertaining himself. Meanwhile, the ant was busy gathering food and storing it for the winter. He advised the grasshopper to prepare and cautioned him not to waste time on the things that brought him temporary fulfillment. Sure enough, winter came, and the grasshopper had nothing to eat. He begged the ant to share his food, but the ant had prepared only enough for his household, so the grasshopper suffered the consequences of his choices. He had as much time and opportunity as the ant to prepare, but he focused on the temporary comforts that the warm summer season afforded him.

How often do we choose to live for today instead of planning for eternity? The urgency of deadlines, appointments, responsibilities and expectations can distract us from our eternal focus. We are told in Matthew 6:19-21, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where you treasure is there your heart will be also.”* Earthly treasures don’t compare to heavenly treasures because they are temporary. Sometimes it’s hard to imagine storing up treasure that we can’t see in a place where we haven’t been. So how do you store up treasure in heaven? You steward well the things you have here on earth. What are you doing with the talents, gifts and blessings God has given you? He wants to be the foundation of your life and walk with you as your life reflects His goodness.

APPLICATION: Read Colossians 2:6-7. Thank God for the blessings He has given you, and commit to building your life on Him by spending time with Him and studying His Word.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for the blessings in my life. I want my roots to grow deep, and I ask that You show me how to build my life on You. Help me to remain focused on You as You walk closely with me. Amen.

A PRESCRIPTION FOR SUBMISSION

"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you."

Exodus 23:20-22 (NIV)

A few months ago, I was prescribed an antibiotic and given clear instructions: take the medicine consistently, don't skip doses, and finish the entire bottle, even if I started to feel better before the medicine ran out. Why? Because my sickness required the full treatment. A full round of antibiotics would treat the infection and keep it from spreading. I trusted the medicine to do its job, so I took it exactly as it was prescribed. When it comes to our faith in God, do we live with that same confidence?

Partial obedience won't bring full healing. If we trust that the Lord is who He says He is, we must decide to obey Him. We need the full treatment. This requires our acknowledgment that Christ died for us and rose to give us eternal life. But it doesn't stop there. We must also surrender our lives to Him, allowing Him to transform us and mold us into His image. We can't hold back parts of our lives and hope for the fullness of what God has promised. We are living for eternity with Him *now*. If we believe Jesus is coming back, we can trust Him with our lives. Scripture says in Proverbs 3:5-7, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight*. Complete trust requires full submission. A life that truly matters, one that prepares us for eternity, is not built on selective obedience.

APPLICATION: Is there an area of your life that you're struggling to give to the Lord? Maybe you're afraid to give up control because you haven't fully trusted in Him yet. What would it look like to fully trust God in that area?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, plant in my heart a desire to fully submit to You. I trust that You are in control and Your ways are better than mine. Help me to anticipate eternity by giving myself completely to You. Amen.

HEART WORK

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

When I was a young mother, I struggled with feelings of inadequacy and comparison. The routine days of bottle washing, naptime and running a household left me questioning the significance of my efforts each day. I would see other mothers juggling playdates and PTA fundraisers, wondering how they found time to paint their nails and why their toddlers never looked disheveled. Meanwhile, I'm living off cheap coffee and minimal sleep. Jealousy crept in, followed by resentment. What was my purpose? Surely it was more than matching socks from the laundry basket or picking up Matchbox cars for the umpteenth time. I wasted precious time seeking approval from others, when all the while Jesus was patiently waiting to teach me that my efforts to nurture my children and care for the needs of my home were never wasted. He intentionally entrusted me with those blessings, and I began to learn that everything I do is for His glory.

We glorify God when we recognize our need for Him. He doesn't expect us to carry burdens we were never meant to bear. He calls us to lay our burdens at His feet and cast our anxieties on Him. The God of the universe, who sent His son as payment for our sins, didn't reject us for our shortcomings and didn't leave us to fend for ourselves. He gave everything so we could be with Him. He also calls us to surrender our personal ambitions and prioritize Him. When He becomes our priority, everything else falls into place. Prioritizing Him means loving Him with all our heart, soul and mind, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. It means spending time with Him and seeking Him by reading and studying His Word. He is faithful to reveal more of Himself as we follow Him. Over time, we will begin to look less like ourselves and more like Him.

APPLICATION: Ask a trusted friend, someone who knows you well, how they see you prioritizing God in your life.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I am humbled and thankful for Your great love for me. I don't deserve it, but You freely offer it to me. Help me seek You at the beginning of each day and help me be mindful to keep You as my priority. I confess my need for You and trust that You are always in control. Amen.

VERIFIED & AUTHORIZED

“My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. ... I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.” **John 17:9, 20 (NLT)**

A passport is an official, government-issued travel document that verifies a person's identity and nationality, allowing international travel, entry into other countries, and re-entry to their home country. It proves you are authorized to go wherever the passport takes you. Now, picture your spiritual passport. Your passport shows your citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) and confirms your identity as a fellow citizen with the saints and a member of God's household (Ephesians 2:19). You are fully equipped, verified and authorized to pray anywhere God's Spirit leads.

Start close to home. When you walk in your subdivision, pass a driveway, or watch your neighbors, you can pray for the families who live there. When you visit a school track, you can pray for the teachers, students and godly influence in that community. Your passport allows these prayers to travel—right in your own neighborhood.

Expand outward. On a drive to work, your prayers can cover your company, coworkers, vendors and leadership. When traveling across town or across the state, your prayers can go with you for cities, schools or organizations along the way.

Take it even further. As your travels expand to highways, flights and international trips, your prayers can reach states, countries and leaders—presidents, prime ministers and people you'll never meet. Your heavenly passport gives you access; you are authorized to pray for the world.

Jesus modeled this for us in John 17, praying not only for His disciples but for all who would come to believe through their message—the Gospel. Every prayer you offer participates in that mission, joining God's work to bring His love and truth to the world. Your passport is ready. You are qualified and authorized. Wherever God calls your prayers to go—near or far—they carry power, because He hears and moves hearts through them.

APPLICATION: Expand your prayers a little further this week. Let the Holy Spirit guide your prayer life to new and exciting places.

PRAYER: Father, I long to be on mission with You. Give me a desire to journey with You in prayer. Take me out of my comfort zone. Help me follow Your lead. Amen.

GUESS WHAT?!

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

Mark 11:24 (ESV)

"So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him."

Matthew 7:11 (NLT)

Once upon a time, in a land far away—Afghanistan—a young warrior, a Marine named Hunter, was serving his country in a time of war. It wasn't easy being away from his family and witnessing so much devastation and loss. Life there felt so different from the life he knew back home in America. The Fourth of July was just around the corner—one of Hunter's favorite holidays. He loved the fireworks, the patriotism, grilling out... and watermelon.

Back home, his parents prayed for their son every day, morning and night. They prayed that somehow, some way, Hunter would be able to enjoy some watermelon on the 4th—even in a war-torn country where so much, especially fresh food, was in short supply and military rations were the norm. They simply wanted him to experience a small piece of joy in the form of his favorite fruit. When the Fourth of July arrived, they received a call from Hunter.

Guess what?! he said excitedly. Then, without missing a beat: *You're not going to believe this... but they gave us watermelon to celebrate today!* It was a gift of joy for his entire troop. Hunter had no idea his parents had been praying for that very thing. When they told him, he was amazed—and so were they. Why are we so often taken aback by God's answers to our prayers? Scripture tells us to expect them, yet we still find ourselves amazed. Why? Because *God is amazing.*

He is a good Father who delights in giving us glimpses of joy, even as we walk through a broken world. So often, He gives us more than we ask for. And when we pray—truly believing—there are no boundaries to where or how He can answer. Even in the farthest places, He provides.

APPLICATION: Ask God for something that seems to be impossible. Ask believing and see what God will do.

PRAYER: Father, You never cease to amaze me. Help me come to You more often, asking with faith so that I can see more of Your goodness. Amen.

ROLODEX PRAYERS

Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.

Colossians 4:2-4 (NLT)

After moving into a new home, I still had some organizing to do. I invited a group of women to help tackle my garage and a few rooms. Digging through boxes, we found an old Rolodex I'd kept for years. I didn't think they were popular anymore—until I checked Amazon. They're still sold! For those unfamiliar, a Rolodex organized names, addresses, and business cards for quick contact. I was about to donate it when one woman suggested a creative idea: list names or topics under each letter, then flip to a different one each day to pray for that person, a country, an organization or something meaningful.

If you love sticky notes, you could do something similar, writing on each page of a block, or use cards, envelopes or whatever works best. It can be a fun, creative project with the Lord, asking Him what to fill your Rolodex with. Of course, it wouldn't replace daily prayers, but it can help jumpstart them.

Tools like this help us focus on prayer amid life's many distractions. Many of us want to make our prayer life richer and seek the Lord intentionally. Colossians 4:2-4 reminds us to be devoted to prayer, staying alert and thankful. These requests focus on sharing Christ—the Gospel—so that it takes a place at the forefront of our prayer list.

Here's an example:

A - Answered Prayers, Adoration, America, Aunt Mary, Amber, Artie...

B - Bravery to share the Gospel, Belief in God's Promises, Brookwood Pastors, Breakthroughs, Better Habits, Bill, Becky, Barbara...

C - Compassion, Consistency, Christlikeness, Calmness, Comfort, China, Canada, California, Cal, Carol, Casey...

APPLICATION: What can you do to build your prayer life and faith? Will you pray for yourself and others for boldness and passion to speak about Jesus? Sometimes we just need a little nudge.

PRAYER: Father, help me focus on You and pray with a thankful heart. Help me seek You daily. Amen.

ANSWERED PRAYERS

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.

1 Chronicles 29:11 (ESV)

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens.

James 1:17a (NLT)

Like many others, I suffer from a disease that can, at times, severely limit my ability to function in normal daily activities. I've got to say, I've been feeling significantly better the past few weeks and days. To that I say, *Praise the Lord! Thank You, Jesus!* He is and always has been my Healer.

I've been healed many times in different ways—including surgery and therapy, through diet and medication, and by hands-on prayer. I always give glory to God for my healings and for everything in my life. For some reason, though, this time I found myself asking, *Could it be the medication that's made the difference, or was it the prayers of friends and family for my disease?* As I thought about it, I concluded that it can be both simultaneously.

God is over all and in all. The verse in 1 Chronicles emphasizes the Lord's power and that everything in this 3D world and in the heavenly realm belongs to Him. So, wherever I find healing, no matter the conduit, God is over it all. And He deserves our glory and praise for everything in our lives.

What if we viewed our physicians, chiropractors, surgeons and physical therapists as healers—created in the image of God, using their God-given gifts to help people overcome injuries and relieve pain? We begin to see it more as a blessing from God and ultimately give Him even more glory.

The Lord is my Sustainer—He always has been, and He always will be. My God sees me, knows my every need, and faithfully provides healing in the most surprising ways... including answered prayers.

APPLICATION: Where have you given credit to something other than the Lord? Can you reframe it so you can give God full credit?

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, I am Yours. I know that everything good in my life comes from You. Help me always give You the glory. Amen.

PRAISE PRAYERS

Praise the LORD!

*Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heaven!
Praise him for his mighty works;
praise his unequalled greatness!*

Psalm 150:1-2 (NLT)

My mom used to take the four of us to the Presbyterian Church, and I remember singing *Doxology*. I still sing it today—around the house, in the shower, anytime. (I’m humming it now!) When I ask Alexa to play it, a couple of versions come up, both beautiful. I especially love a cappella singing without music. Fun fact: In Italian, a cappella means *in the style of the chapel*, from early church worship without instruments. Here are the beautiful words written so long ago, offering praise to the Trinity... Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow! Praise Him, all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host! Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!*
Thomas Ken, Author 1695

Worship songs are more than melody, notes, words, crescendos and choruses. They blend all these, but at heart, they’re like prayers. When we sing, our voices offer praise—and praise itself is prayer. Prayer isn’t only asking; it begins with adoration of God, moves to thanksgiving for His goodness, presents others’ needs, and brings our own requests. In the end, it’s all offered to the Lord, for His glory.

Here’s a beautiful praise prayer called *Beautiful* by Ben Laine. It’s on my favorite bedtime playlist on Amazon Music, and it brings tears to my eyes.

[Chorus]
You’re beautiful, You’re wonderful
Worthy is the King above all kings
You’re masterful, my all in all
There’s no greater song that I can sing
You’re my everything

APPLICATION: What’s your favorite praise and worship song? The next time you sing along, try making it your prayer. Focus on the words and bring glory to the Lord.

PRAYER: Father, may my praise prayers bring glory to Your name! Amen.

MORNING MAIL

*In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait expectantly.*

Psalms 5:3 (NIV)

*Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go,
for to you I entrust my life.*

Psalms 143:8 (NIV)

Who doesn't love getting mail? We're not talking a fleeting, here-today-gone-tomorrow email or text message; we're talking about the rare and wonderful postmarked paper envelope that arrives in your mailbox, delivered by a person in uniform driving a United States Postal Service truck. You know, the uniquely-shaped piece with your name and address written by hand—the one you grab hold of first because it stands out from advertisements and bills as something more special.

Thinking on these two verses in the Psalms in the morning might bring a similar feeling. *Picture this...* You wake up, and before your feet hit the floor, you take a breath, hear the birds singing, and rest in the love the Lord has for you. He watched over you through the night, and His gift is this new day. He reminds you of His faithfulness and how He has lavished His love on you. In these quiet moments of first light, you ask Him—not for things, but for wisdom to use your day well, for a word or verse to carry with you...things like that. You wait expectantly, listening and watching for God's answer throughout the day—trusting Him with every step and looking to Him for direction on which way to go, not only in big decisions, but in the little ones that may seem insignificant, but aren't.

When the subtleness of your morning moments with God flows throughout your day, you'll look back and see what He has brought you. Your special mail piece, post-stamped by heaven, might come as an opportunity, a reunion, renewed hope, a text, a call or an invitation to lunch. It might be a memory of a loved one who has passed. This is prayer. It's beautiful and unlike any other form of communication. It's uniquely designed by God and uniquely personal between you and Him.

APPLICATION: What are some small prayers that you can bring before the Lord in the mornings? Will you ask Him for a word or verse and wait expectantly?

PRAYER: Father, thank You for the gift of a new day and of prayer. Remind me of Your unfailing love in the mornings and help me to trust You throughout my days and with my life. Amen.

HEAVEN IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

...looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

2 Peter 3:12-13 (NLT)

What comes to mind when you imagine heaven? When I was a child, cartoons like *Tom and Jerry* or *Bugs Bunny* pictured heaven as a place of white clouds where people floated around playing harps. Everything looked sterile and quiet. Honestly, that sounded boring to me. Even today, many Christians imagine heaven as an endless church service where we simply sing worship songs forever. That picture reminds me of a line from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The religious Miss Watson told Huck that heaven was a place where people *go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever*. He concluded he didn't think much of it.

Maybe popular culture is not the best place to get our theology.

The Bible actually gives a much richer picture. First, God tells us there are two heavens. Scripture speaks of the present heaven, where believers go when they die, and the future new heaven and new earth that God will create when Christ returns. In Revelation 21, the picture John gives us is not one of Christians going up to a far-off mystical heaven to live with God forever, but of Christ coming to earth a second time, creating a new physical heaven and earth. The new earth will be the new heaven where Christ dwells with us here on a physical planet forever.

We do not leave this earth to live forever in some disembodied state on clouds floating around, but Christ returns to dwell with all redeemed humanity and the angels here on the new physical earth. God restores and heals all that sin has damaged, both in us and in creation.

Imagine a world where God's presence fills every corner of life, where beauty, joy, meaningful work, and perfect fellowship flourish without sin, suffering, or death.

APPLICATION: When you picture the future God has promised, let it fill your heart with gratitude. Your salvation means more than escaping judgment; it means one day living forever in Christ's restored world, enjoying His presence fully.

PRAYER: Lord, enlarge my vision of the future You have prepared for Your people. Help me live with hope today and with excitement to share this good news with others. Amen.

IMAGINE YOUR RESURRECTED BODY

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

Philippians 3:20-21 (NLT)

In the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, my wife's Christmas favorite, people die, become angels, and then must earn their wings. Today, many Christians still think they will become an angel when they die. You won't, and you don't get any wings. What's coming is far better.

We have this stunning promise for those of us in Christ. Jesus rose bodily from the dead; the tomb was empty. He revealed himself to his disciples in a resurrected body that was both spiritual and immortal, yet physical. He looked and sounded like the Jesus they had known. Mary recognized his voice, Jesus ate fish, and Thomas touched him. He had a physical glorified body. And the amazing promise of Scripture is that's the body we're promised too.

Paul tells us that Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back (1 Corinthians 15:23 NLT). God is going to take our current weak mortal bodies and *change them into glorious bodies like his own*. We will need resurrected physical human bodies to live in this new physical heaven and earth. You will still be you. You will have your name, look like you and sound like you, only better because there will be no more pain, sickness or decay.

Some dream we'll all be forever 20-something. The Bible doesn't tell us. Thomas Aquinas suggested we'll all rise in *the condition of perfect age*, like Jesus at 33. I like that idea; I looked better at 33 than I do now. But honestly, in eternity, *age* might not even apply. These glorified bodies will be strong for meaningful work in God's new creation.

APPLICATION: Your body matters deeply to God, both now and forever. Today, honor Him with it. Care for it wisely, use it to serve others, and present it as a living sacrifice. Let the hope of your coming glory shape how you treat this temporary tent.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank You for the empty tomb and the promise of my own resurrected body, glorious, like Yours. When pain, fatigue or aging weigh me down, lift my eyes to that day. Strengthen my hope in the life to come so I can live faithfully with this body today. Amen.

THE JOY OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

*No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. **And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.*** **Revelation 22:3-4 (NLT)**

When I was dating Deb in college, she would sometimes take the Greyhound bus back to Atlanta, where we were in school. I would be waiting at the station, scanning the crowd with eager anticipation. I remember how my heart leapt when I saw her face appear. There is something about seeing the face of someone you love. Research shows babies do better when they recognize the faces of their mother and father. People see faces on the moon and in toast. We all love seeing faces. But there is one face above all others.

As amazing as the new heaven and earth will be with streets of gold, dazzling jewels, vibrant colors, breathtaking architecture, redeemed people from every nation, and so much more, the greatest joy will not be the place but experiencing the presence of God and seeing Him face to face. I don't know how billions of Christians will be able to see the face of Christ, but the amazing promise is that we will.

The Bible repeatedly highlights this intimate encounter of seeing God *face to face*. Think of Moses speaking with God as a man speaks to his friend, or the high priest entering the Most Holy Place once a year. In eternity, that veil is gone forever. Worship will not be limited to set times; all of life will be lived in God's unhindered presence. Our relationship with Him will be free from sin's distortion. Think of it, no more hiding or distance.

What will we be doing? Far more than just singing. We will be worshipping God with unending joy, knowing Him more deeply than we ever could on earth, and experiencing perfect communion with Him and with one another. Every moment will be saturated with His love, His beauty and His nearness. The curse will be lifted. Our deepest longing will be fulfilled in beholding Him.

APPLICATION: Practicing worship now prepares our hearts for eternity. Make time today to fix your eyes on Jesus, through His Word, in prayer and in quiet adoration. Train your soul to delight in His presence.

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for the promise that one day You and I will be face to face, and I will live in Your presence without any barrier. Deepen my love for You today. Amen.

REIGNING AND WORKING IN HEAVEN

*No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. ... **And they will reign forever and ever.***
Revelation 22:3-5 (NLT)

I'm bored. Once a year, my wife and I host a weeklong *Camp PawPaw* for all five of our grandchildren. We have a great time, and everyone knows that Mimi is the most important person at the camp, if for no other reason, her southern cooking is amazing. But if I hear one more time, *I'm bored*, I may strangle a precious grandchild. They are so used to being entertained nonstop with activities and screens that anytime things slow down, they are bored. Because many Christians have been led to believe that heaven is eternal rest without responsibility and work, they worry they too will be bored. Here is the good news: you won't be bored for a moment.

The centerpiece of the new heaven and earth is the new heavenly Jerusalem, which John describes using symbolic language, as in the rest of Revelation, because human words are inadequate to describe this amazing and beautiful new home.

But what will we be doing on this new earth? God already has millions of angels, and we will join those angels in worship, but is that it? While we are not given details, several times Scripture says that we humans will *reign forever and ever* with Christ. You will have tasks to accomplish and opportunities to use your God-given skills and abilities to serve Him and steward this new earth and creation.

Here's more good news: your work will no longer include frustration and futility because the curse of sin will be broken. You will work without getting exhausted, and no one will oppose you or have co-workers driving you nuts. No more ego and pride to hinder your progress. It is hard to imagine how delightful work will be when you can use your creative, organizational, and inventive skills to love and serve others and reign with Christ. What you do every day will make a difference, bring joy and glorify God. I can't wait.

APPLICATION: Realize that what you do now in this life is preparing you for your work in heaven. Every act of faithfulness, every moment of integrity, every small stewardship prepares you for the greater responsibilities awaiting in the renewed world.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank You for the glorious promise of a curse-free creation where we will reign with You. Open my eyes to see my present work as worship and preparation for eternity. Amen.

COME ENJOY A FEAST WITH FRIENDS

“And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven.”
Matthew 8:11 (NLT)

I don't know about you, but sometimes I find people annoying. There are times I resonate with the *Peanuts* character Linus, who once famously said *I love mankind ... it's people I can't stand. One day, that won't be a problem.*

The Jews in Jesus' day had the same mistaken idea that some Christian denominations have today. They believe they are the chosen ones, and only they have the right doctrine, so they will be the only group in heaven. Jesus shocked His listeners when He not only complimented the faith of a Roman military officer but also said that in the resurrected life on the new earth, there will be many Gentiles enjoying a feast with Old Testament saints like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The picture Scripture gives us of heaven is not you sitting on a cloud by yourself, or everyone bowing before Jesus, singing and worshiping for eternity, only interacting with Christ. The apostle John tells us, I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. Some see that as the only thing we will be doing, but Scripture also gives us a picture of feasts, celebrations, relationships and conversations. Heaven will be an incredible, joyful community full of people from every culture. And none of us will be marred by sin.

There will be billions of people to get to know, including all those individuals we read about in the Old and New Testaments. Just as the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, even though they died centuries earlier, many believe you will recognize everyone in heaven, and they will recognize you. Every relationship you have here will be even richer in heaven.

We will have all of eternity to hear each other's stories and celebrate how God's goodness and grace were a part of our lives from the moment we were born. It is hard to imagine the joy, love, community, and work we will experience together.

APPLICATION: Invest in relationships now. Each one will be a part of God's eternal kingdom.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for the people You have placed in my life, and help me continue to make time for meaningful relationships. Amen.

THERE WILL BE ENDLESS DISCOVERY

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ... And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" ... The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city.

Revelation 21:2, 5a, 24-26 (NLT)

This picture of heaven is far different from what I grew up understanding. As we have discussed, God will make everything new on this new physical earth and universe for us to serve and enjoy in our new resurrected physical bodies. Some see the descriptions of the size and features of the New Jerusalem as symbolic of God's total dwelling place with His people. But physical bodies on a physical earth, which is now heaven, will need a real physical place to live.

Notice that Revelation mentions nations and kings in this new earth, which could mean there will still be human cultures, organizations and leaders, yet without sin. This is not a picture of uniformity or loss of identity. Rather, it shows that the best of human culture, art, music, craftsmanship, literature, technology and every noble achievement will be purified, redeemed and carried into eternity. What we create under God's inspiration will find its place in the city of God, and we will continue to develop it.

Because our Creator is infinite, eternity will never grow stale. We will never exhaust learning more about God. We get to spend endless ages discovering more of His character, wisdom, love and glory. We will also explore the renewed creation itself, traveling to every place on this new earth and exploring every culture. There will be no boredom, only ever-increasing joy in discovery.

APPLICATION: A heart hungry for God now prepares you to delight in endless discovery later. Live with eternity in view and let every glimpse of His glory fuel your longing for more.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for promising to make everything new and inviting us into a future of endless discovery. Help me live with eternity in view, cultivating wonder and faithfulness today so I may delight in Your infinite glory forever. Amen.

SEASONS

For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NLT)

Are you a summer or winter kind of person? Spring or fall, maybe? I find myself wanting spring to come, only to wish autumn would come back again. Each season has its positives and negatives. One thing is for sure, though: the seasons will come no matter my preferences.

Our lives have seasons as well. Some of you are graduating from college and starting on the road to adulthood. Others of us have children in diapers, and we're navigating the terrible twos. Some of us are taking our kids to get their driver's license, while others are navigating being empty nesters. You may be caring for your aging parents. Maybe you are the aging parent.

Each season has unique activities that go with it, and these activities occur under the view of heaven. Interesting that while we may be focused on our seasons and activities, God is watching over us. Whatever season you are in, rest assured that God is still in control and orchestrating events according to His will and for your good.

Do you ever wonder how all these seasons are going to end? After all the ups and downs of life? All the celebrations and the struggles? We are told in Ecclesiastes, by the wisest man who ever lived, that there is a season for everything...even the end of lives here on earth...the earth itself. Not a topic we often reflect upon, but it seems to come up more often these days. The Bible talks about it, so we have somewhere to go for awareness and answers.

Whatever season you are in, rest assured that God is still in control and orchestrating events according to His will and for your good. That is a good season to always be in.

APPLICATION: Reflect on one hard season in your life and one great season in your life. What do you believe came from those seasons? Look to share your lessons with someone who is going through a similar season.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for the seasons of my life. Help me to embrace whatever season I am in now. Grant me wisdom to learn from all the seasons of my life. Amen.

ALL IN THE TIMING

He has made everything beautiful in its time. **Ecclesiastes 3:11a (NKJV)**

Are we there yet? You have either uttered these words or heard them from the back seat while driving to a destination. Other variables of this are: *When are we going to get there? What is taking so long? Please hurry...I have to go to the bathroom!*

I love the *destination* of a vacation, a dinner, or a family gathering. I just don't like the *journey* sometimes. Maybe I'm just nosey or a control freak, but I want to know when we are going to be there...wherever there happens to be. There are probably many family members who have trauma because of my nagging to know the ETA of the trip.

What often gets missed in the focus on the destination is the beauty of the trip. Some of the most beautiful scenery can be seen through a car's windows or windshield. Have you ever driven by a field of flowers or seen wildlife living their best lives as you drive by? The warm glow of the sun shining on your face? The nighttime sky full of twinkling stars? The sound and smell of rain falling?

All of these are beautiful in their own way. God, as we see in Ecclesiastes, makes things beautiful in His time. His timing is perfect. Our lives are beautiful even with all our imperfections. Life is to be lived and experienced in the present. Sometimes we miss the beauty of the now because we are focused on the latter; we miss the beauty of the journey because we are focused on the destination.

Are you concerned about what happens when this life is over? Are you focused on how the end of this life will play out? You are in good company if you're wondering about these things. When the disciples ask, in so many words, *When are we going to get there?* Jesus tells them in Acts 1:6-8 that God has planned it. Rest assured that God has it all figured out.

APPLICATION: Spend 5 minutes walking outside. Focus first on the beauty you see, then the beauty you hear, and, if applicable, the beauty you feel or smell. Take a moment to thank God for His creation.

PRAYER: Father, help me to see the beauty today and praise You for it. Amen.

EARLY, LATE OR ON TIME?

Don't overlook the obvious here, friends. With God, one day is as good as a thousand years, a thousand years as a day. God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change.

2 Peter 3:8-9 (MSG)

Simon. Theodore. Alvin. Do these names sound familiar to you? If they do, you are probably close to retirement age. These are the names of the famous *Alvin and the Chipmunks*. And way back in the mid-1900s, they had a famous song called *The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late)*. In a nutshell, because Chipmunks like nuts, the Chipmunks lament the fact that Christmas isn't here yet. They are trying to be good and want their presents, which include a plane and a hula hoop. (Look up the song to get the full effect of the devotion.) Many a child, and some adults, I assume, can relate to this refrain of wanting Christmas to hurry up so the presents can be opened!

Do you ever feel like God is *late* with the things you want to see happen? Like the Chipmunks proclaiming their fear that Christmas will somehow be late, we often discuss with God how His timing is off; it doesn't fit our schedule. And yet, somehow, God's timing is perfect. Have you ever looked back on a situation where you were sure things should go a certain way within a certain time frame (you had it written down in your planner), only for it to take longer and you to be frustrated or upset? And yet, something came from it that the extra time made it work better than if it had occurred in your timing?

That word that we all love to hear (insert sarcasm emoji) comes to mind: patience. Many of us struggle with this word, but God doesn't. He knows the end from the beginning, and He is working everything out for our good... and for others' good. His patience yields eternal results; His patience allows many to come to Him for salvation. His patience is perfect.

APPLICATION: Journal some gratitude prayers to God about blessings that have occurred in your life because God was patient with you. Some areas could include your relationships, your finances or your health (physical/mental/emotional).

PRAYER: Father, I pray that many will recognize Your patience today and respond to the invitation for eternal life. Amen.

SEEING CLEARLY

Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately.

Matthew 24:4-6 (NLT)

One of my favorite movies growing up was *The Karate Kid*. Daniel LaRusso is a teenager of a single mom who moves across the country, and finds his life to be difficult. He is mentored by Mr. Miyagi, who teaches him many life lessons as well as karate. During one of his training sessions, Daniel is frustrated by what he sees as the lack of progress in karate. As Mr. Miyagi trains and teaches him, Daniel looks down in frustration. Mr. Miyagi quickly corrects him and says, *Eye... always look eye*.

Why is *always look eye* so important for Daniel LaRusso and for us? Because when we look into the eye of an authority, what we see steadies us. Ultimately, when we look into the eyes of Jesus, we see many things, including peace, strength and love. Why is that important to experience? Well, three of the gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) tell us that we will hear about wars and rumors of wars. The price of war is steep, and war can be quite traumatic. But look at what Jesus says next.... He says don't be alarmed and don't panic.

Jesus gives us those words because He is the authority over everything. It doesn't mean there won't be trials, but He is in charge. He knows how all this will end. He knows that an eternity with Him awaits.

Like Mr. Miyagi saying, *Eye... always look eye*, Jesus is saying to look to Him, to look at Him as these wars and rumors of war occur. When we look elsewhere, we often become alarmed and panicked.

APPLICATION: Take some time to process moments in the past where you took your eyes off God. Share with someone how that turned out. Then, share with someone how things turned out when you kept your eyes on God. Next, have someone else share their experiences with keeping their eyes on God versus taking their eyes off God. Then pray for each other as God leads.

PRAYER: Father, teach me to always look at and to You. Fill me with Your peace. Amen.

ALL'S WELL...

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Luke 10:17-20 (NIV)

Do you remember a time when you achieved something that made you feel really good? I remember graduating from high school. We were outside at the football field. It was near sunset—beautiful, clear sky. I was surrounded by family and friends. We threw our caps into the air when we were announced as graduates. I had finally arrived!

Three months later, in a college dorm room, I was overwhelmed by the start of the next part of this journey we call life. I remember my dad's words to me when I graduated high school. That day when he said, *Now it really begins*. Man, was he ever right about that!

What has brought you joy or happiness? Those moments are probably etched in your memory, but the feeling might be gone. I call it the echo effect. You can recall the memory, but the feelings are not as sharp as they used to be.

Jesus talks to the disciples as they come back from a successful journey, where they are excited about the results. *Even the demons listened to us*, they say. They are fired up that they *won*. Jesus recalibrates their focus. Jesus brings to the forefront that their joy should be in the fact that their names are written in Heaven. Jesus sees the eternal, whereas the disciples see the temporary.

Why does Jesus do this? Because this joy will never fade. This joy is eternal. Being in Heaven with our Father, with Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and our brothers and sisters is definitely something we can rejoice in... forever!

APPLICATION: Reflect on joyful moments in your life. Praise God for those moments. Then reflect on what it means to have your name written in heaven. Write a thank you to God for His goodness to you. Keep it in the devotion booklet to refer back to when needed.

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I can rejoice over my name being written in the Book of Life! Amen.

...THAT ENDS WELL

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV)

There are two sayings that are related. The first one is: *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder*. The second one is: *A face only a mother could love*. (Side note: There is an offshoot to this that says *you have a face only a moose could love*.) What do these sayings have in common? The value of the thing being looked upon is determined by the beholder or the person who is doing the looking. What is *beauty* to you? Your spouse? Your children? The ocean? Nature? Whatever it is, how does looking upon it make you feel? How does it stir you on the inside?

I was recently blessed with being able to see the Northern Lights. I have never seen the sky look the way it did that night. Colors that are hard to describe. The feelings and emotions I experienced are hard to describe. I have pictures and videos of this experience. I can show them to you, but as the saying goes, the pictures don't do it justice. Why is that? Because the actual experience affects all our senses in ways that go beyond them. What does that mean?

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has placed eternity in our hearts. We have a sense that there is more to this world than just this world. We have a sense of eternity, but it isn't quite clear yet. The book of Revelation gives us a sense of how this world will end and how the new heaven and new earth will appear. And when this world is gone, and a new earth and heaven are created, we get the indescribable gift of eternity with God!

APPLICATION: Spend a few minutes with God asking Him to make you more aware of the eternity that has been placed in your heart. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you more and more. Ask Him to create a hunger in you to know more about Him.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for making all things new! Amen.

THE DOOR WE CHOOSE

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. **John 3:17-18 (NIV)**

Many people struggle with the idea of hell. It can sound like a place God angrily sends people who disappoint Him. But when we listen closely to the words of Jesus, we discover something surprising: His focus isn't on keeping people out of heaven. His focus is on bringing people in.

Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, but to save it. God's heart always moves toward rescue. Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus healing, forgiving and inviting people who thought they were too far gone. The cross itself is proof of how far God is willing to go to bring us back to Him.

Yet Jesus also speaks honestly about human choice. He says that those who reject Him *stand condemned already*. That phrase may sound harsh at first, but it reveals something important: condemnation isn't God's preferred plan. But it is the natural result of refusing the rescue He offers. C.S. Lewis wrote that in the end there are only two kinds of people: those who say to God, *Your will be done*, and those to whom God ultimately says, *your will be done*. In other words, God does not force anyone into a relationship with Him. Love that is forced isn't love at all.

Imagine someone standing outside a warm house during a storm. The door is open, the lights are on, and a voice invites them inside. If they refuse, the storm isn't the host's fault. The invitation was real, the welcome genuine, but the choice was theirs. In the same way, Jesus is the open door to life with God. Hell results from choosing life apart from Him. Thankfully, the door is open—Jesus invites anyone into forgiveness, new life and a relationship with God.

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes today to reflect on your response to Jesus. Have you simply known about Him, or have you personally trusted Him? If you already follow Him, ask God to help you live with gratitude for the grace you've received and compassion for those who haven't yet experienced it.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for sending Jesus as the invitation into life with You. I pray that many would come to accept the invitation and experience new life in You. Amen.

ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. **2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV)**

Most of our daily decisions are shaped by what we can see right in front of us. Deadlines, bills, relationships, disappointments, and hopes all compete for our attention. Life can start to feel like a race to manage the next problem or secure the next comfort. The apostle Paul writes about fixing our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. That sounds strange at first. After all, how do you focus on something you can't see? Paul isn't suggesting we ignore the real struggles of life. Instead, he's reminding us that the visible world is only part of the story.

I remember a father explaining this idea to his two young boys. They were getting ready for a family trip, and the boys were stuffing their backpacks with toys: cars, games, and anything that looked fun in the moment. Their dad stopped them and said, *You only have room for a few things. Think about the beach and what you'll need.* One boy kept piling in his favorite toys. The other paused and started thinking about the destination. He packed a few toys that he knew would be so fun in the sand. One boy's perspective changed his priorities.

Living with an eternal perspective works the same way. When we remember that eternity is real, our priorities begin to shift. We become less consumed with temporary wins and more focused on the things that last. Things like loving people well, trusting God in difficult moments, and investing our lives in what truly matters are eternally focused choices. Even suffering begins to look different when we remember that this life is not the final chapter.

Eternal perspective doesn't make today meaningless; it makes today more meaningful. Every moment becomes an opportunity to live in light of God's bigger story. One day, the temporary things we worry about will fade away. But the love we show, the faith we place in Christ, and the ways we follow Him will echo into eternity.

APPLICATION: Ask God to help you see your life through the lens of eternity. Consider one area where you've been overly focused on temporary concerns. Invite God to reshape that area so your choices reflect what truly lasts.

PRAYER: Lord, help me fix my eyes on what is unseen so that my focus can be on the things that matter most. Amen.

THE NARROW GATE

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

Matthew 7:13-14 (NIV)

Most people assume that if something is popular, easy or widely accepted, it must be the right path. Rarely do people choose the harder road when an easier one sits beside it.

When Jesus spoke about eternity, He described life as two paths. One road is wide and easy to travel, requiring little reflection or intention. People move with the crowd, doing what feels good or what others are doing. The path is comfortable, but it leads away from life with God. The other path is different. Jesus describes it as narrow. That doesn't mean it's hidden or impossible to find. Instead, it requires a deliberate choice. Walking this road means trusting God, turning away from things that pull us away from Him, and following Jesus even when it isn't the most popular direction. We won't know the right path because of its popularity, but because of where it leads.

At first glance, that might sound restrictive. But the narrow road leads to freedom and life. Jesus wasn't trying to make faith complicated, but inviting people into a different way of living—the way the Creator originally intended. Think about the difference between drifting and choosing a direction. If you step into a river and simply float, the current will take you wherever it flows. But if you have a destination, you swim differently. You move with intention because you know where you want to go, following Him toward something far greater.

The good news is that Jesus doesn't simply point to the path. He walks it with us. Through His life, death and resurrection, He made a way for forgiveness, new life and a restored relationship with God. The road that leads to life is always open.

APPLICATION: Take a moment to reflect on the direction your life is moving. Are your daily choices helping you follow Jesus more closely, or are you simply drifting along with what feels easiest? Ask God to help you walk intentionally with Him today, even in small decisions.

PRAYER: Christ, thank You for providing a path for me to walk on that leads to life. Help me to find Your path and to stay on it diligently. Strengthen me for that today. Amen.

THE TIME IS NOW

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Mark 16:15 (NIV)

One of Jesus' final commands is the Great Commission—to go and proclaim the Gospel. It's called a commission, or co-mission, because only God can transform a heart through the Spirit, yet He chooses to use us as His instruments to share His Word. This is both a privilege and a responsibility entrusted to every believer.

In today's culture, many have removed the topic of hell from the Gospel. Some think it's barbaric or harsh, while others fear that speaking about hell might guilt people into faith decisions. I understand the latter concern, but I have a problem with avoiding the subject altogether—because Jesus didn't avoid it. He talked openly about hell, warned about it, and ultimately died so that no one would have to go there. Hell should compel us to share our faith. Understanding its reality reveals the seriousness of sin and the urgent need for the Gospel. Hell is not a scare tactic—it is the real consequence of rejecting God's love and mercy.

Remembering heaven and hell reminds us that the stakes are eternal. In the grand scheme of eternity, we will never regret every person we spoke to about Jesus. Evangelism is not just about words—it is shown through our actions, character and relationships. Our lives should reflect the hope, grace and holiness found in Christ. When people see the difference Jesus makes in us, they become more open to hearing about Him.

We are called to be witnesses, not lawyers. We don't have to build airtight arguments for God's existence; we're called to testify about His love. The reality of hell should fill our hearts with compassion and urgency. The Gospel offers freedom, forgiveness and eternal life—a stark contrast to the despair of hell. Consider this: the only thing that lasts forever is people. They either live eternally connected to God in heaven or eternally separated from Him in hell. Every time you share your faith, you're investing in eternity. It's one of the greatest causes and missions you can pursue in your life.

APPLICATION: Look for opportunities today to testify and speak of God's love.

PRAYER: Lord, fill my heart with Your love for people. Open my eyes to someone who needs to hear about Your grace and salvation. Give me courage to speak, wisdom to know what to say, and kindness in the way I say it. Prepare their heart to receive Your truth. Use my life and words to point them to Jesus and the hope found in Him. Amen.

THE GREATEST TRAGEDY OF HELL

“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”
Matthew 25:41b (NIV)

When we talk about hell, most often we focus on the fire, suffering or pain. While those are terrible realities, the greatest tragedy of hell is something deeper: it is a place of separation from God. It is a place where God is absent, where His kingdom does not dwell. If God is the source of life, joy, hope and goodness, imagine what it means to be somewhere without Him—where none of those exist. Many people imagine heaven simply as a place of pleasure and fulfillment of desires, which it is, but the central reality of heaven is Jesus Himself.

So sometimes people ask, *Why would a loving God send people to hell?* The truth is, if you don't love Jesus and don't want to spend time with Him, then heaven isn't where you'll be. Hell is the result of someone's ongoing choice to live separated from God. To me, that is the greatest tragedy of all.

In this world, we still see signs of God's reign and rule. But hell is a place where humanity is completely cut off from God. This eternal estrangement from the Creator—the source of life, love and joy—is the deepest sorrow of hell. It is a place of utter isolation, devoid of hope and light.

Jesus didn't want anyone to go there. He shed every last drop of His blood so no one has to. But make no mistake—there are no second chances after death. This truth helps us understand why sin is so dangerous. Every act of rebellion distances us from God. Sin in our hearts creates separation, and that separation is what makes us miserable. Yet God's love continually calls us back. Nothing can separate God's children from Him—not even hell. This truth should inspire us to share the Gospel so others might know the joy of God's presence rather than the pain of separation.

APPLICATION: Drop everything and say yes to God!

PRAYER: Lord, today I say yes to You. I turn from my sin and choose the life You offer through Jesus. Thank You for Your mercy, Your forgiveness, and the salvation You freely give. Help me trust You fully and follow You with my whole heart. Receive my life and make me new. Amen.

GOD IS COMING TO JUDGE

"For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light." **Luke 8:17 (ESV)**

We live in a culture that often emphasizes God's love—which is absolutely true—but many rarely wrestle with the reality of God as a just God. God is holy, full of love, but also full of justice. Some people feel overwhelmed when we talk about a God who will bring justice and judge the world. However, I want to suggest that the only thing more overwhelming than the idea of God coming to judge is the idea of God not coming to judge.

Think about it. We hear countless stories of tragedy, murder, violence and corruption all around us. Many of the Psalms express the struggle of seeing evil prosper while God's people suffer. How do we find hope? Part of the answer is heaven, but it's also the assurance that God will make things right. We live in a world hungry for justice. We long for it and often feel despair when we don't see it. Listen to what Miroslav Volf says: *My thesis is that the practice of non-violence requires a belief in divine vengeance... Violence thrives today, secretly nourished by the belief that God refuses to take the sword... if God were NOT angry at injustice and deception and did NOT make a final end of violence, then God would not be worthy of our worship.*

When we don't get justice or see evil prevailing, we can still have hope because a day is coming when God will judge and bring holy justice. This hope allows people to suffer and live in peace amid uncertainty.

Growing up, my grandmother loved the television show *Unsolved Mysteries*. On the day Jesus returns, there will be no more unsolved mysteries. That show will be canceled—every secret will be revealed, every case closed, every ledger balanced, every account settled. Justice will be served.

Live in the light of Jesus' return. He is coming in love but also as a judge. Everything that is hidden will be brought to light. Let this truth comfort us and inspire us to live in holiness.

APPLICATION: Rest in the promise and right every wrong.

PRAYER: Thank You, God, that You are a holy judge. Thank You that we can trust You to make things right and that You are coming to judge the world. Please come quickly! Amen.

HEAVENLY REPORTER

This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John, who faithfully reported everything he saw. This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. **Revelation 1:1-2 (NLT)**

It's so refreshing to receive information and know it's 100% accurate. In today's world, we are pulled in so many directions, leaving us confused, doubtful, hopeless and often frustrated. Everything is so fast-paced, and we receive information so quickly that before we can even process it, it changes. Each day, we may follow stories of many kinds that deliver a lot of information, so it's important to know that the source is reliable. Not only that, but it's helpful as we live day to day. Thankfully, in Jesus, we have the ultimate source. Jesus resides in heaven and is faithful and true. Revelation chapter 1 gives us a promise and points us to the one true, reliable witness, Jesus Christ.

The enemy loves nothing more than to attempt to confuse us by sharing fragmented information, twisting the truth just enough to try to fool us into following false information. As we look to Revelation chapter 1, it's important to pay attention that it refers to John as a faithful reporter and later to Jesus as the faithful witness. We look for information and stuff to help us every day—our phones, our workplace, our relationships, and so much more. But what about heaven? Do we look toward heaven for help? Heaven offers us reliable, unblemished help that is not temporary but lasting. Love, guidance, encouragement, hope and security, all things that are not always lasting here on earth. When we rely on Jesus, who is seated in heaven, we find peace beyond our understanding. Our help comes from the Maker of the heavens and the earth.

APPLICATION: Allow yourself today to refocus on Scripture, pay attention to the small details mentioned. These details give us a true account of reliability. Shut your phone off, turn off the news, stop relying on what others say, and let the manual created for your life speak louder than anything else: the Bible.

PRAYER: Jesus, this world is so loud at times. Help me focus on You and Your words, so I can see glimpses of heaven now and meditate on the beauty and goodness You have given. Amen.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. **Colossians 3:2 (NLT)**

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. **Philippians 3:20 (NLT)**

It's always great to go on a vacation, take a trip, or even go camping if that's your thing. But for me, one thing is always true—there's no place like home. I've heard people say they get homesick after being away for a long period of time. What if, as believers, we lived like we were homesick? My wife and I have a son in the Marines, and he often shares how much he misses home. Homesick is his word. Is it the familiarity of the surroundings he misses? Is it the comfort and security of home? Yes, it's all those things. But the greatest thing he misses is being in the presence of those who love him and that he loves. He understands that he is a member of our household. He has full access to our home. He has a key. He doesn't have to knock. It's home, and he always has access to it.

We can embrace that heaven is our home as believers because Jesus has given us full access. Jesus has made a copy of the key to heaven, and when you trust Him with your life, He gives you your own set of keys. This gives us the assurance that we are members of His household. When we need help, when we are down, or when we face hardships, we can always turn toward home, knowing we are never homeless. In Jesus, we are never subject to eviction because of whose household we belong to. We always have full access.

APPLICATION: Ask God today where your focus is. Is it on temporal things or heavenly things? Ask God to reveal to you, in Scripture, some glimpses of heaven in the now of your life; ask Him to give you an awareness of being homesick for heaven.

PRAYER: God, I know this world has so much to offer, but at the same time, I know it doesn't last. Help me today to look to You for guidance. Help me remember that this life is a temporary home; it is a tent that will be taken down one day, and I will reside in a permanent home with You in heaven, where I get to enjoy now and for eternity. Thank You, Jesus, for rescuing me from hell and the grave. In Your name, I pray. Amen.

WHEN WE GET THERE!

"And you know the way to where I am going."

"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

John 14:4-6 (NLT)

Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him—even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the world will mourn for him. Yes! Amen!

Revelation 1:7 (NLT)

Before taking a trip, the greatest and most important part is knowing our destination. Where are we headed? I know someone who may read this and say, *I live spontaneously. I don't need a destination, I just go!* I'm sure that keeps things interesting; however, it's also rather dangerous.

In John 14, Jesus tells the disciples, *"... you know where I am going."* Only for Thomas (the doubter), whom I can relate to at times, says, *"We have no idea where You are going."* In other words, your destination is unknown to us. Jesus shares that this is how you get there: *follow Me. I am the way* (Jesus, the reliable witness). *I have all you need for this trip. I am your help right now.*

In Revelation 1:7, Jesus shares where that destination is. He says, *Look!* (Pay attention) *He comes with the clouds of heaven.* Everyone will see Him, where He comes from—Heaven. It continues in verse 8 with Jesus declaring, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end."* So, *I know where I came from, and I know the way back.* No breadcrumbs required to get back home because we know the way.

All destinations have a starting point and an ending point. When we reach the end of our journey here on earth, people read our birth date and the day we passed. In between is a dash representing our journey here on earth—our journey toward our destination with God.

APPLICATION: Take a moment and ask yourself, have I given much thought to my end destination? Do I just know about Jesus, or do I know Jesus as a true Savior? Do I believe He is the way, the truth, and the life?

PRAYER: Jesus, show me today who You are to me, soften my heart to Your voice and Spirit. May I open myself up to meditating on heaven created for me to live with You forever, and may I share that with others. Amen.

IT'S PERSONAL

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last."

Revelation 1:17 (NLT)

*I look up to the mountains—
does my help come from there?
My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth!*

Psalms 121:1-2 (NLT)

Have you ever had someone tell you, *Don't take it so personally*? As we read in Scripture, everything is meant to be taken personally. It's meant to guide us, correct us and prepare us for heaven. Heaven helps us prepare for our home in heaven forever. Often, when things are personal to us, it's because they help us or hurt us in some way. If we believe that heaven is just some far-away destination that we can't reach, it probably will not be a very personal place for us. As we live here on earth, we experience glimpses of heaven daily. We encounter people, see beauty around us, work, perform tasks and use our imagination to wonder about things.

I think of heaven as a place where I will perform many of the same things I do here on earth. I will converse with others, laugh with others, worship with others, and share a meal with others—but without the negativity or pain of this current life. For me, I choose to make heaven a very personal and present reality in my life right now. The same God who created heaven also created me, and He created you. That doesn't get more personal than that. Many have said, *I just can't see any experiences of heaven in my life*. The idea of striving harder to see heaven often causes us to miss the blessings that are already in our presence. When we pray, we are speaking directly to heaven. When we serve someone, we act out instructions from heaven. When we love someone, we live out the greatest command from heaven. God is a very personal God who offers us His help today and waits for us to call on Him.

APPLICATION: Make a list today of what you value and why. Then ask yourself what value that has in heaven. If heaven is meant to help us now, then where does everything fall in perspective?

PRAYER: Father, I want to embrace heaven today. Show me what is preventing me from valuing how heaven can help me live out my purpose today for others and Your kingdom. Amen.

WORSHIP CONNECTS

Come, let us worship and bow down.

Let us kneel before the LORD our maker, for he is our God.

Psalms 95:6 (NLT)

It was the Lord's Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit.

Revelation 1:10a (NLT)

I read the other day about people's views of heaven. One that stood out is the idea of having wings, floating on a cloud, and strumming a harp for eternity. What value does that even have? It sounds fine for a children's book, but that idea isn't very helpful if we're looking for how heaven helps us now in our day-to-day lives. One great way we can embrace the help of heaven today is through worship. It is an amazing way to connect with God. Proper worship moves the heart of God like incense that permeates heaven. It acts as a bridge between heaven and Earth, placing us directly in the presence of a Holy God.

People often talk about waking up in the middle of the night with anxiety. I can relate to this greatly. I've had this happen on numerous occasions. I've found that breathing slowly, focusing on God, and singing or humming a song calms me down and helps me find rest. Sometimes it happens quickly, sometimes it takes longer, but it always calms me down, and eventually I fall asleep. It helped me know that I could make that call home to heaven for help in those moments. When we worship, we pull heaven down to earth. Heaven is not just a destination, a thought, an eternal vacation, or a childlike idea of floating on a cloud. Heaven is real, a place that Jesus promised He was preparing for us as believers.

We cheer at ball games, parties and children's events. Why? It draws us close to what we are cheering for. Choosing to worship draws us close to God and to others around us. If we are seeking heaven's help now, it begins with allowing ourselves to be present through worship to the One who created heaven and earth.

APPLICATION: Allow yourself today to worship freely with no distractions. Act as if you're the only person on earth, and just seek God through prayer, praise and conversation. Then just sit in silence in those moments as you are surrounded by heaven itself.

PRAYER: God, help me not view heaven as a mythical written story of a place but a place of reality that I am invited to be a citizen of. Help me remember today Your promise that You prepared heaven with me in mind. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

WHAT WE LEARN

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. **Philippians 4:8-9 (NLT)**

While meditating and praying about this week's devotionals, my thoughts kept returning to one larger question: *How does heaven help me now?* To truly understand that, we should revisit the questions from the past four or five weeks of devotions. All of it leads us to today's focus—*What we learn*. Are we ready? Are we living for heaven, knowing what lasts forever and what we will do there? To see how heaven helps us now, we must reflect on these questions. As believers, heaven is already around us—God breathes in us, blessings flow daily, and when we say, *Help me, Jesus*, we call on Heaven's help.

When we learn to love and be loved, heaven helps us now. When we develop community and genuine relationships, heaven helps us now. When we serve others with no expectations, heaven helps us now. When we are obedient with our resources, Heaven's help is here for us now. *"May your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* Heaven helps us now by living out the opportunities He has given us.

In today's Scripture, Paul encourages us to live out what he taught in the name of Jesus Christ—teachings that show us how to live as part of the kingdom of heaven. Not just in words but lived out for others to see. Be the example of what a citizen of heaven looks like and share with others the hope of heaven.

APPLICATION: Ask yourself the questions mentioned today about where you are right now about heaven. Then ask the Spirit to show you how heaven is helping you today, how you can live that out, and how you can share it with others you encounter.

PRAYER: Father, remind me today of the presence of heaven around me in others, in their actions, in my own actions and help me now be the member of heaven You created me to be. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN HEAVEN

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.”
Revelation 2:17 (NASB)

Onomastics is the study of names. In biblical times and cultures, parents often chose names for their children that revealed deeper meanings. It may have been an observation of the child’s behavior, like with Jacob in the story of Jacob and Esau. Jacob means *he who takes by the heel, or he who supplants* (Genesis 25:25-27), which foreshadowed his schemes to take the family’s birthright from Esau.

God would also use names to communicate with His people. When two of the prophet Hosea’s children were born, God instructed him to name them Lo-ruhamah (she has not obtained compassion) and Lo-ammi (not My people) to communicate His displeasure with Israel’s idol worship.

A name isn’t merely something we’re called, but a core part of our identity. And who knows us better than God Himself? God’s communication in Revelation 2:17 may have been a message to the church of Pergamum, but it gives us unique insight into how personal our relationship with God is, especially once we’re forever in His presence in heaven. According to this verse, God will give a white stone with a new name to the believers who overcome, who fight the good fight and who finish the race and run to His arms at the end of their lives.

Whether this stone is a symbolic guarantee that our names are written in heaven or it literally has a name known only between you and God, each person is a unique identity and individual soul that God created. Each person reveals a unique aspect of God’s infinite personality, talent, creativity, compassion and love. If you’re a believer, a white stone is awaiting your arrival in heaven, and your ever-growing relationship with God will have all eternity to grow ever deeper!

APPLICATION: Take some time to meditate on the reality that God knows you by name. In a world of parasocial relationships where we know and respect people who will never know we exist, the God of the universe knows you. Sit in that and celebrate it today.

PRAYER: God, thank You for knowing and loving me. The God of the universe, the Creator of all, knows my name. Help me to walk in the truth of the name You know me by. Amen.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS IN HEAVEN

"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'"
Luke 16:25 (NASB)

Have you ever worked at a job that was awful, but tolerable because the people you worked with were awesome? Conversely, have you worked at a job that was fine, but soon became insufferable because the people you worked with were awful?

Relationships are fundamental to the world God created (Genesis 2:18) and are both the most edifying and the most destructive part of life. They give life its highest highs and lowest lows. They can heal the deepest hurts or inflict the deepest scars. When people are on their deathbed, they don't celebrate or regret their things, but their relationships.

In the parable Jesus tells in Luke 16:19-31, Lazarus suffered in this life. This wasn't merely the poverty and sickness that led to his death, but a severe lack of compassionate relationships. He sat at the rich man's gate and received no aid from anyone. The love of those around him was lacking.

On earth, this pendulum of relationships swings wildly in two directions, but in Heaven, it will only swing one way. In Heaven, our love will be whole, because it won't stem from our selfish desire but from our union with God. In Heaven, our relationships with others will be whole. They will never be draining, disappointing, hurtful or destructive. They will be whole, clean, always edifying, always rewarding. In Revelation 21:4, God says, *"...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."* Most of the mourning, crying and pain in this life are caused by others or by us. One day, God will fix all of it, including how we treat each other.

APPLICATION: Celebrate the relationships that bring joy and hope to your life. Mourn those who have left you feeling disappointed or hurt. Thank God that He'll provide a future world where everyone, including you, will only be capable of good. Long for that day and ask God to bring that part of heaven to earth today.

PRAYER: God, thank You for how You've made relationships. Help me to love the people I encounter, regardless of how they treat me. I give all my hopes and disappointments to You, knowing You'll make it all right one day. Amen.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MYSELF IN HEAVEN

*Instead of your shame you will have a double portion,
And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over
their portion.*

*Therefore they will possess a double portion in their
land,*

Everlasting joy will be theirs.

Isaiah 61:7 (NASB)

What's weighing you down today? Where do you feel insufficient? What doubt is holding you back? What guilt keeps drawing your mind from the present? You don't need to deep-dive into answering all of these, and the intent of these questions isn't to make you dwell on your shortcomings. The point of these questions is to see how much weight you're always carrying and to point you to a future hope.

Isaiah 61:7 is a prophecy Jesus fulfilled through His birth, death and resurrection. The future heaven the Bible describes isn't possible through our strivings. Jesus won it for us. Only through the power and effort of a perfect and loving God can we experience a double portion instead of shame or joy instead of humiliation. Everlasting joy is only possible through the God of hope who fills you with joy (Romans 15:13). In heaven, you'll experience the joy of His presence, and that joy will replace the weight you're carrying today.

One day, you will be at peace with who God is and who He created you to be. No more guilt. No more shame. No more war between the Spirit and your selfishness. The still-small voice telling you the right thing to do will no longer be lowered, dulled or muted. You'll always know the right path, the right thing to say, the right amount to get done today. You won't have to work at or agonize over the right things; the right things will become a natural outpouring of who you are. You won't have doubts about who you are or what you should be doing. Any guilt you once carried will be washed away in the reality of God's mercy and goodness.

One day, you'll be at peace with yourself.

APPLICATION: Write down the things that are weighing you down right now. Go through each one and pray thanks over the reality that one day these worries, doubts and fears won't be present in your heart. Ask God for the strength to tackle them with His power today.

PRAYER: God, help me to fight with Your power today. My flesh, my selfishness, draws me away from you, but Your Spirit brings me into Your presence. Give me my daily bread, the power to trust in You today instead of myself. Amen.

RECONNECTING WITH LOVED ONES IN HEAVEN

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 (NASB)

C.S. Lewis, the author of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Mere Christianity*, and many other Christian works, was part of the Inklings, a group of friends who loved fantasy and Christian values. Sadly, one of their friends, Charles Williams, died unexpectedly. This loss was devastating, and Lewis explored this loss in the excerpt below from *The Four Loves*:

In each of my friends, there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out...Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald's [Tolkien's] reaction to a specifically Charles joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him to myself now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald.

As Christians, God tells us to grieve over lost loved ones, but not to despair. Jesus still grieved over the death of His cousin John the Baptist, knowing full well He'd see him again (Matthew 14:13). In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, Paul wanted to fill believers with hope. It's okay to miss those we've lost today, knowing full well that we'll reconnect with those who knew Jesus again.

This does beg the question: what about those who die, but don't accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior? This is too big a topic for such a small devotional, but we have to trust that in heaven nothing will be lacking. God will fill our souls with joy and hope, so it's important to share Him with as many people as we can to fill heaven with more children, more family, more friends.

APPLICATION: Thank God that you'll see loved ones who know Him again. If you're unsure or discouraged about the salvation of someone who's passed, entrust it to God. Pray for the salvation of people in your circle who may not know Jesus so that heaven will grow bigger, and our love will be further augmented.

PRAYER: God, thank You for Your grace, Your mercy and Your salvation. Thank You that I'm one of Your children and give me a heart to tell people about You to further grow Your family. Amen.

NEW FRIENDS IN HEAVEN

"I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven..."

Matthew 8:11 (NASB)

If you could have dinner with three people, living or dead, and there was no language barrier, who would they be and why?

People have wanted lost loved ones at the table, prominent historical figures, artists they admire, influential authors, actors they think are funny, and the list goes on and on. Some of the most interesting answers don't just account for meeting specific people, but also for wanting to see these people interact with each other at the table. What would conversations between Abraham Lincoln and Jimmy Stewart be like? What would J.R.R. Tolkien and Gandhi talk about? Would my grandmother get along with Jane Austen, or would they argue all night? (And would that entertainment be the reason why I'd choose them?)

When I've asked believers this question, they inevitably want Jesus at the table, to which I immediately clarify that He's with us through the Spirit, so they'd need to choose someone else from the Bible: Paul, Peter, Esther, Ruth, David, Mary, etc. I've asked this question to people over the years and have learned a lot about which biblical figures resonated with people and why.

Everyone wants to know more and to hear it from the person who experienced it. What was David feeling when he gathered his rocks to fight Goliath? How did the people around Mary respond to her miraculous pregnancy? What was it like for Peter to literally walk on water toward Jesus?

In heaven, we'll get to have these conversations! Jesus says in Matthew 8:11 that people will *recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*. If you're God's child, that means you too! You'll make new friends with the people you've read about in the Bible, and you'll meet many other heroes of the faith you've never heard of. We'll have eternity to hear everyone's stories of God's faithfulness, His miracles and His presence. An infinite God can be discussed with countless people who have their own personal experiences to share, and all of us will have a seat at that table!

APPLICATION: If you could have dinner with three believers you know will be in heaven, who would they be and why? What questions would you ask and what stories would you want them to tell?

PRAYER: God, I'm excited about meeting all YOUR children one day! I look forward to asking others for their stories of Your goodness, and ask for Your help to obey You so I'll have stories to tell as well! Amen.

MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN

"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."
Matthew 22:30 (NASB)

For the full context of Matthew 22:30, read verses 22:23-33. The Sadducees tried to trap Jesus with a theological puzzle of how marriage would work in the afterlife to prove their belief that an afterlife didn't exist. Like all other traps people tried to spring on Jesus, this one didn't work either. Jesus used Scripture to disprove the Sadducees while also giving us insight into the marriage relationship in eternity.

For married couples, the revelation in this verse that *in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage* can be saddening. A healthy marriage that lasts a lifetime is indeed a beautiful thing. The thought of experiencing such intimacy in this life only to *lose* it for eternity can be puzzling. If marriage is a gift from God and He brought together Adam and Eve, how can taking it away in heaven be a good thing?

Jesus' answer to the Sadducees forces us to consider the ultimate purpose of marriage. In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul links the marriage relationship to Christ's relationship with the church. Everything exists by God and for God: even marriage. All the powerful, loving and sacrificial acts in marriage pale in comparison to what Jesus did for us, and as we love God and obey Him, each facet of our lives draws us into a greater understanding of His divine plan and a greater intimacy with Him.

Heaven won't take away any of our joy, but will only add to and perfect it. Even if marriage doesn't exist in heaven, the intimacy we long for will be experienced more fully. We don't have the exact specifics on how this will work, but, as with all our questions, we have to trust that God knows what He's doing.

APPLICATION: If you're married, take time to pray for greater intimacy with your spouse, on your own and with your spouse. Thank God that the intimacy you experience now will be even greater on the other side of eternity. If you aren't married, ask God for His intimacy now and pray for your future relationship if that's what you want. If you are intentionally staying celibate, thank God for the intimacy you can have with Him now and ask Him for a double portion of it in this moment.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for the gift of marriage. You put it on earth to give us a greater understanding of who You are and how You love us. Help us to love better and to keep our eyes on the true intention: greater intimacy with You. Amen.

MORE SQUARES ON THE CALENDAR?

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”
John 17:3 (NIV)

We often think about eternity in the only terms we know—time. When we imagine heaven, it’s easy to picture an endless extension of our calendars: more days, more tomorrows, more squares stretching forever across the page. Life just... *continuing*. But Scripture suggests something deeper. Eternal life is not simply more time; it’s a completely different kind of life. It’s not defined by duration but by relationship. Eternity begins not when the calendar runs out, but when our hearts awaken to the presence of God.

I remember when I was struck by this truth. I was sitting on the back porch early one morning. The air was cool, the sky was still gray, and I had a cup of coffee in my hands and my Bible open in my lap. Nothing dramatic happened—no thunderbolt of revelation. But for a few quiet minutes, everything slowed down. My mind wasn’t racing ahead to the day’s tasks. My phone wasn’t buzzing. I sat there, aware that God was near. It felt strangely full—like time had deepened instead of just passing. When I finally looked at the clock, I was surprised to see that only ten minutes had passed. It had felt like much longer. Not in a boring way, but in a rich way, like a moment that somehow held more life inside it than usual.

In other words, heaven isn’t just more squares on the calendar. It’s the end of the restless feeling that there’s never enough time. It’s the end of rushing, worrying and feeling pulled in a thousand directions. It’s life finally centered around the One our hearts were made for. And the beautiful truth is that this kind of life doesn’t start someday far away. It begins now, whenever we slow down enough to seek Him.

God transcends the sequence of time itself.
R.C. Sproul

APPLICATION: Sit quietly today.

PRAYER: Lord, help me stop rushing through life and start noticing You in the quiet, everyday moments. You are the One who really makes life full, not just more time on the calendar. Teach me to live in the experience of Your presence, trusting that every small moment with You is already a taste of heaven. Amen.

WITHERING GRASS

*Forever, O LORD, your word
is firmly fixed in the heavens.*

Psalm 119:89 (ESV)

*The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.*

Isaiah 40:8 (ESV)

Ever struck by how short life is? Jobs end, relationships end, health changes and plans we thought were certain dissolve in ways we never expected. Even moments of joy, beautiful as they are, eventually pass. Sometimes it feels like nothing lasts, nothing holds. And in those seasons, it can be hard to imagine that anything truly endures.

I remember the time my grandma passed away. I remember how much she loved gardening, especially flowers. I was stung by bees several times while visiting her! After she passed, I stopped by her house, which had been given to my nephew, and saw that the flowers had wilted and were worn by the sun. It reminded me how short life is and that many of the things I enjoy don't last forever.

Later on, I remembered the beauty of God's promises. While the roses fade, God's Word does not. While our plans fail and falter, His promises remain. The reassurance of Scripture—His faithfulness, His love, His power—is something we can anchor our hearts to, even when everything else seems fleeting.

Today's Scripture reminds us that permanence doesn't come from the world around us, but from God Himself. Our possessions, accomplishments and even relationships are gifts meant to point us to something greater, not to satisfy the longing for lasting security. God's Word stands firm through generations, through trials and through the passing of time. When life feels uncertain, when joy is fleeting, or when grief overwhelms, we can hold onto His truth.

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes to reflect on God's promises.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that even when everything around me fades—the people I love, the moments I cherish, the plans I make—Your Word remains. Help me hold onto Your promises when life feels uncertain or fleeting, trusting that You are faithful and unchanging. Teach me to anchor my heart in You, finding hope and peace that outlasts grief, fear and disappointment. Amen.

YOUR GREATEST LONGINGS

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. **Psalm 16:11 (NIV)**

Life is full of longings. We search for joy, peace, love and purpose in so many places—careers, relationships, hobbies, achievements—hoping they will satisfy the deep ache in our hearts. Yet no matter how much we accomplish or how many good things we experience, there's a part of us that still feels empty. That's because we were created for more than the temporary pleasures of this world. Our souls are made for God, and only He can fully satisfy our deepest longings.

I remember a season a few years ago when I felt restless and unfulfilled. I had a stable job, friends who cared for me, and a life that looked *good* on the outside, but inside, I felt a quiet hunger I couldn't explain. I tried filling it with busyness, distractions, even small comforts, but the longing remained. One evening, exhausted and frustrated, I somehow landed on Psalm 16:11. As I read it slowly, it felt like God was speaking directly to me: He knew my deepest longings, and He promised joy in His presence and pleasures that would never fade. *That's what I had been longing for!*

Today's Scripture reminds us that what God gives us isn't temporary or shallow. He knows the path that leads to true life, and in following Him, our deepest longings are not ignored; they are fulfilled. When we turn to Him instead of the world's fleeting comforts, we discover a joy and satisfaction that nothing else can give.

*If I find in myself desires that nothing in this world can satisfy,
the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.*
C. S. Lewis

APPLICATION: Write down one thing you're tempted to rely on for happiness, then intentionally thank God for His presence and ask Him to be your true source of joy instead.

PRAYER: Lord, I confess how often I try to fill my heart with things that can't satisfy. Thank You that You see my deepest longings and promise joy and fullness in Your presence. Help me to turn to You instead of the world, trusting that the path You guide me on leads to real life and lasting delight. Fill me with Your joy today, and teach me to rest in the eternal pleasures only You can give. Amen.

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

*Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done
and what I had toiled to achieve,
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;
nothing was gained under the sun.*

Ecclesiastes 2:11 (NIV)

Been to the airport recently? I guess you can't take a 6 oz. bottle of travel shampoo with you, even if there's only a little bit left. According to TSA, here are some other things you can't take with you: Knives, guns, dynamite, and bowling balls—apparently they count as potential weapons—all are prohibited. Cast-iron frying pans—heavy enough to be used as a club—and baseball bats or golf clubs—*anything bludgeon-like* stays out of the cabin (OK, those make sense). Foam toy swords—even fake weapons can cause alarms, along with pepper spray or mace, which aren't allowed in carry-on (and are limited in checked bags), and are restricted. Large snow globes—if the liquid inside is over 3.4 oz, it's gone—and *Magic 8 Balls*—the liquid inside breaks the liquid rule—are banned. Drills and power tools—TSA doesn't want mid-flight construction projects—and screwdrivers longer than about 7 inches—tools can be considered weapons. Fireworks or flares, realistic replica explosives (again, those make sense). Strike-anywhere matches or lighter fluid—flammable materials are prohibited—all are forbidden.

Some things you can't take with you. The same goes for when we pass away. We invest so much energy in work, possessions and accomplishments, thinking they will last forever and satisfy us. Who doesn't have storage spaces with things we haven't seen or used in decades?! But when we stop and think about it, it's obvious these things cannot be carried beyond this life. True value isn't found in what we own or the titles we earn, but in the relationships we nurture, the love we share, and the ways we reflect God's character. When we shift our focus from temporary gains to eternal treasures, our hearts discover peace and meaning that truly last.

APPLICATION: Name one thing you've been holding onto (except Jesus) and let it go.

PRAYER: Lord, help me see that possessions, achievements and comfort cannot follow me beyond this life. Teach me to invest in what truly lasts. Guard my heart from chasing temporary things, and fill me with peace, trusting that Your presence is the greatest treasure I can carry. Amen.

BROWN BANANAS

“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”
John 6:27 (NIV)

I used to throw away bananas the moment they turned brown. I'd buy a bunch, eat them on cereal, but by midweek, the rest would sit on the counter, turning darker and softer by the minute. Yes, I realize that with a little imagination (and Facebook recipes), they could be turned into banana bread, smoothies or pancakes. Nevertheless, it's a fact: some things last forever, and some things don't.

So many things we chase in everyday life don't last. The latest phone, gadget or app seems *essential* today, but it will feel outdated in just a few months. Check my web browser history, and you'll see the latest phones I've been checking out. *Ouch!* Paychecks, savings and bonuses come and go, and money alone can't fill the heart. Compliments, likes or recognition feel good for a moment but quickly fade. Our physical strength, youth and appearance change over time, no matter how hard we try to fight it. Perfectly planned weekends, vacations or experiences bring joy, but that joy is short-lived. Even friendships or relationships that depend on convenience rather than love and faithfulness can falter. These things may delight temporarily, but only God's presence, love, and promises truly endure.

*Our treasures on earth decay and perish,
but the joys of heaven remain forever.*
Charles Spurgeon

APPLICATION: When you eat today, be thankful. But also use that time to remember how some things last forever, and some things don't. Thank God for eternal life and things that truly last.

PRAYER: Lord, I admit how often I chase things that fade, and forget the treasures that truly last. My heart longs for what endures, for peace, purpose and joy that only You can give. Help me turn my attention to You, to seek Your presence above all else, and to trust that what You place in my life is eternal. Fill me with patience and faith as I learn to value what never fades. Amen.

ALL THINGS NEW

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also, he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Revelation 21:5 (ESV)

We've moved several times over the years. Every room in each of those houses needed repainting (and usually the ceilings). The walls often had holes from clocks and pictures, and colors were outdated (one room I remember was bright yellow—and that was the family room!). Everything needed some tender, loving care. Often when we rolled on the fresh coat of paint, the room slowly transformed. *Beauty at last!* What had felt tired and worn suddenly felt new, alive and full of possibility. It wasn't just about color—it was a reminder that change, renewal and fresh starts are possible, even in the spaces we least expect.

That image keeps coming back to me when I think about what God does in our lives. He doesn't just cover over our mistakes, regrets or brokenness; He makes things new. He can take relationships that have frayed, hearts that feel weary, and seasons that feel hopeless and breathe life into them in ways we cannot orchestrate on our own.

I remember a time when I felt stuck—emotionally drained, questioning my purpose, and unsure if I'd ever move past certain failures. Prayer felt heavy, and hope seemed distant. But slowly, day by day, God worked. Conversations healed, perspectives shifted, and I began noticing small sparks of joy again (and fewer trips to the pantry for Pop-Tarts). What felt impossible to fix became something renewed, a life more alive than I had imagined.

God's promise to make all things new isn't just about a fresh coat on the surface; it's about transformation that reaches deep into our hearts, our minds and our circumstances. It's trustworthy, true and available for every area of our lives, no matter how broken or worn things feel today.

APPLICATION: Fix something today. Something that's been broken or needs to be replaced. And as you do that, remember that one day, God will make all things new. Permanently.

PRAYER: Lord, I confess how often I feel stuck and weighed down by what feels broken in my life. Thank You that You don't just cover over my struggles—You make all things new. Help me to trust Your timing, lean into Your presence, and notice the small ways You bring renewal each day. Restore my heart, my hope and my perspective, and teach me to walk in the life You are creating in me. Amen.



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