# My Utmost for His Highest – 4/21/20

# Don’t Hurt the Lord

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Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? —[John 14:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+14%3A9)

Our Lord must be repeatedly astounded at us— astounded at how “un-simple” we are. It is our own opinions that make us dense and slow to understand, but when we are simple we are never dense; we have discernment all the time. Philip expected the future revelation of a tremendous mystery, but not in Jesus, the Person he thought he already knew. The mystery of God is not in what is going to be— it is now, though we look for it to be revealed in the future in some overwhelming, momentous event. We have no reluctance to obey Jesus, but it is highly probable that we are hurting Him by what we ask— “Lord, show us the Father…” ([John 14:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14:8)). His response immediately comes back to us as He says, “Can’t you see Him? He is always right here or He is nowhere to be found.” We look for God to exhibit Himself to His children, but God only exhibits Himself in His children. And while others see the evidence, the child of God does not. We want to be fully aware of what God is doing in us, but we cannot have complete awareness and expect to remain reasonable or balanced in our expectations of Him. If all we are asking God to give us is experiences, and the awareness of those experiences is blocking our way, we hurt the Lord. The very questions we ask hurt Jesus, because they are not the questions of a child.

“Let not your heart be troubled…” ([14:1, 27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14:1;27)). Am I then hurting Jesus by allowing my heart to be troubled? If I believe in Jesus and His attributes, am I living up to my belief? Am I allowing anything to disturb my heart, or am I allowing any questions to come in which are unsound or unbalanced? I have to get to the point of the absolute and unquestionable relationship that takes everything exactly as it comes from Him. God never guides us at some time in the future, but always here and now. Realize that the Lord is here now, and the freedom you receive is immediate.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

“When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” We all have faith in good principles, in good management, in good common sense, but who amongst us has faith in Jesus Christ? Physical courage is grand, moral courage is grander, but the man who trusts Jesus Christ in the face of the terrific problems of life is worth a whole crowd of heroes.  The Highest Good, 544 R

# CCEL – 4/21/20

**Stand fast in the Lord.**—[PHI. 4:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.4.html" \l "Phil.4.1)

My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.—The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back into perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.—If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

If ye continue in my word then are ye my disciples indeed.—He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.—Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.—Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.—He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.

[Job 23:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.23.html" \l "Job.23.11).[Psa. 37:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.37.html" \l "Ps.37.28). -[Psa. 121:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.121.html" \l "Ps.121.7).[Heb. 10:38,39](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.38). -[I John 2:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.19).[John 8:31](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.8.html" \l "John.8.31). -[Matt. 24:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.24.html" \l "Matt.24.13). -[I Cor. 16:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.16.html" \l "iCor.16.13). -[Rev. 3:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.3.html" \l "Rev.3.11). -[Rev. 3:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.3.html" \l "Rev.3.5).

“I know that my Redeemer liveth.” **[Job 19:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.19.html" \l "Job.19.25)**

The marrow of Job’s comfort lies in that little word “My”—“My Redeemer,” and in the fact that the Redeemer lives. Oh! to get hold of a living Christ. We must get a property in him before we can enjoy him. What is gold in the mine to me? Men are beggars in Peru, and beg their bread in California. It is gold in my purse which will satisfy my necessities, by purchasing the bread I need. So a Redeemer who does not redeem me, an avenger who will never stand up for my blood, of what avail were such? Rest not content until by faith you can say “Yes, I cast myself upon my living Lord; and he is mine.” It may be you hold him with a feeble hand; you half think it presumption to say, “He lives as my Redeemer;” yet, remember if you have but faith as a grain of mustard seed, that little faithentitles you to say it. But there is also another word here, expressive of Job’s strong confidence, “I know.” To say, “I hope so, I trust so” is comfortable; and there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who hardly ever get much further. But to reach the essence of consolation you must say, “I know.” Ifs, buts, and perhapses, are sure murderers of peace and comfort. Doubts are dreary things in times of sorrow. Like wasps they sting the soul! If I have any suspicion that Christ is not mine, then there is vinegar mingled with the gall of death; but if I know that Jesus lives for me, then darkness is not dark: even the night is light about me. Surely if Job, in those ages before the coming and advent of Christ, could say, “I know,” we should not speak less positively. God forbid that our positiveness should be presumption. Let us see that our evidences are right, lest we build upon an ungrounded hope; and then let us not be satisfied with the mere foundation, for it is from the upper rooms that we get the widest prospect. A living Redeemer, truly mine, is joy unspeakable.

# Word Live – 4/21/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 4/21/20

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# Today in the Word – 4/21/20

# Inadequate Faith

**Read:** [**Matthew 17:14–21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+17%3a14%e2%80%9321)

### **Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy**

14When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. 15“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

17“You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” 18Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

19Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

20He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” [21] [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+17%3a14%e2%80%9321#fen-NIV-23722a)]

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 17:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+17%3a14%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-23722) Some manuscripts include here words similar to Mark 9:29.

There is no more helpless feeling than that of parent by the bedside of their ill child. It’s been called “a deep and hollowing pain.” Jesus, who often ministered to the sick and their families, certainly knew this. That’s what makes His reaction to the father in today’s passage so surprising.

Have faith in God. Mark 11:22

Jesus and the disciples had just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus’ face shone like the sun as Moses and Elijah appeared beside Him. God the Father spoke from heaven, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (Matt. 17:5). The sight that greeted them upon their return was less glorious. A crowd surrounded the disciples, and the Scribes were arguing with them (Mark 9:14). “Lord, have mercy on my son,” a man from the crowd said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him” (Matt. 17:15, 16).

Why does Jesus react to this man’s plea with a rebuke? Is Jesus’ reproof aimed at the father or the disciples? It seems likely that both are in view. When the disciples asked why they had been unable to heal the boy, Jesus pointed to their weak faith (v. 20). The disciples’ question shows they were surprised by their failure. They had cast out demons before. Confidence and faith are not the same. Mark’s account of this miracle provides added detail: the father’s faith was weak as well (Mark 9:21–24).

Jesus’ surprising rebuke underscores the importance of faith. Faith is trust. It is the assurance of a child who relies on a parent to provide what is needed.

>> When you are struggling, pray this prayer: “Lord, I believe but help me with my unbelief!” Faith is a trust convinced that God ultimately knows what is best and that He will do what is right. Faith is reliance upon God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

### **Pray with Us**

Following the prompt of today’s devotional, we commit to prayer our faith, acknowledging that faith is also a gift from God. We ask the Father to “help us with our unbelief.”

## BY Dr. John Koessler

# Our Daily Bread – 4/21/20

# Friends Again

 **Read:** [**Romans 5:6–11**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.6%E2%80%9311)

6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

How much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! [Romans 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.10)

A mother and her young daughter are sitting in church one day. During the service, opportunity is given for people to publicly receive God’s forgiveness. Every time someone walks forward to do so, the little girl begins to clap. “I’m so sorry,” the mother later tells the church leader. “I explained to my daughter that repentance makes us friends with God again, and she just wanted to cheer for everyone.”

Simplified for a child’s mind, the mother’s words were a good explanation of the gospel. Once God’s enemies, we have been reconciled to Him through Christ’s death and resurrection ([Romans 5:9–10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.9%E2%80%9310)). Now we’re indeed God’s friends. Since we were the ones to break the friendship (v. 8), repentance is our part in completing the restoration process. And the little girl’s response couldn’t have been more appropriate. Since all heaven claps when just one person repents ([Luke 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2015.10)), she was unknowingly echoing its applause.

Jesus described His reconciling work in similar terms. “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” ([John 15:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2015.13)). As a result of this sacrificial act of friendship toward us, we can now be friends with Him. “I no longer call you servants . . . . Instead, I have called you friends” (15:15).

Once God’s enemies, we are now God’s friends. It’s an overwhelming thought. And one worth clapping about.

By:  [Sheridan Voysey](https://odb.org/author/svoysey/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How often do you describe your relationship with God as one of friendship? In practical terms, how is your friendship with Him going today?

God, thank You for loving me when I was still Your enemy. I repent of everything that disappoints You and celebrate being Your friend.

#### **Insight**

Reconciliation restores those who’ve been alienated. Paul uses the word reconcile more than any other New Testament author, often multiple times in a passage; for example, he uses it three times in [Romans 5:10–11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.10%E2%80%9311). He also uses it in [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2011.15), [2 Corinthians 5:18–19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%205.18%E2%80%9319), and [1 Corinthians 7:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%207.11) (related to human reconciliation).

Today’s passage highlights the necessity of Jesus’ death for our reconciliation to God. But that isn’t the end. Our reconciliation through His death leads to our salvation through His life. Paul writes, “How much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” ([Romans 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.10)). Notice that there are two different tenses used: we have been reconciled and we shall be saved. Paul says that both the death of Jesus and His resurrected life are necessary to our salvation.

# God Calling – 4/21/20

# You Will Conquer

I am with you.  My Presence is a sign of My forgiveness.  I uphold you

You will conquer. Do not fear changes. You can never fear changes when I, your Lord, change not. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. I am beside you. Steadfastness, unchangingness, come to you, too, as you dwell with Me. Rest in Me.

As breathing rightly, from being a matter of careful practice, becomes a habit, unconsciously, yet rightly performed, so if you regularly practice this getting back into My Presence, when the slightest feeling of unrest disturbs your perfect calm and harmony, so this, too, will become a habit, and you will grow to live in that perfect consciousness of My Presence, and perfect calm and harmony will be yours.

Life is a training school. Remember, only the pupil giving great promise of future good work would be so singled out by the Master for strenuous and unwearied discipline, teaching and training,

You are asking both of you to be not as hundreds of My followers, nay as many, many thousands, but to be even as those who reflect Me in all they say and do and are. So, My dear children, take this training, not as harsh, but as the tender loving answer to your petition.

Life can never be the same again for either of you. Once you have drunk of the wine of My giving, the Life Eternal, all earth's attempts to quench your thirst will fail.

"I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Exodus 3:14

# My Utmost for His Highest – 4/22/20

# The Light That Never Fails

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We all, with unveiled face, beholding…the glory of the Lord… —[2 Corinthians 3:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Corinthians+3%3A18)

A servant of God must stand so very much alone that he never realizes he is alone. In the early stages of the Christian life, disappointments will come— people who used to be lights will flicker out, and those who used to stand with us will turn away. We have to get so used to it that we will not even realize we are standing alone. Paul said, “…no one stood with me, but all forsook me….But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me…” ([2 Timothy 4:16-17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+4:16-17)). We must build our faith not on fading lights but on the Light that never fails. When “important” individuals go away we are sad, until we see that they are meant to go, so that only one thing is left for us to do— to look into the face of God for ourselves.

Allow nothing to keep you from looking with strong determination into the face of God regarding yourself and your doctrine. And every time you preach make sure you look God in the face about the message first, then the glory will remain through all of it. A Christian servant is one who perpetually looks into the face of God and then goes forth to talk to others. The ministry of Christ is characterized by an abiding glory of which the servant is totally unaware— “…Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him” ([Exodus 34:29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+34:29)).

We are never called on to display our doubts openly or to express the hidden joys and delights of our life with God. The secret of the servant’s life is that he stays in tune with God all the time.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We should always choose our books as God chooses our friends, just a bit beyond us, so that we have to do our level best to keep up with them. Shade of His Hand, 1216 L

# CCEL – 4/22/20

**If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.**—[LEV. 1:3,4.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Lev.1.html" \l "Lev.1.3)

God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.—Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.—We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.—A ransom for many.

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.—I will love them freely.—The Son of God . . . loved me and gave himself for me.

He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.—He hath made us accepted in the beloved.

[Gen. 22:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.22.html" \l "Gen.22.8). -[John 1:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.1.html#John.1.29). -[Heb. 10:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.10). -[Matt. 20:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.20.html" \l "Matt.20.28).[John 10:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.10.html" \l "John.10.18). -[Hos. 14:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Hos.14.html" \l "Hos.14.4). -[Gal. 2:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.2.html" \l "Gal.2.20).[II Cor. 5:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.21). -[Eph. 1:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.6).

“Him hath God exalted.” **[Acts 5:31](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.5.html" \l "Acts.5.31)**

Jesus, our Lord, once crucified, dead and buried, now sits upon the throne of glory. The highest place that heaven affords is his by undisputed right. It is sweet to remember that the exaltation of Christ in heaven is a representative exaltation. He is exalted at the Father’s right hand, and though as Jehovah he had eminent glories, in which finite creatures cannot share, yet as the Mediator, the honours which Jesus wears in heaven are the heritage of all the saints. It is delightful to reflect how close is Christ’s union with his people. We are actually one with him; we are members of his body; and his exaltation is our exaltation. He will give us to sit upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and is set down with his Father on his throne; he has a crown, and he gives us crowns too; he has a throne, but he is not content with having a throne to himself, on his right hand there must be his queen, arrayed in “gold of Ophir.” He cannot be glorified without his bride. Look up, believer, to Jesus now; let the eye of your faith behold him with many crowns upon his head; and remember that you will one day be like him, when you shall see him as he is; you shall not be so great as he is, you shall not be so divine, but still you shall, in a measure, share the same honours, and enjoy the same happiness and the same dignity which he possesses. Be content to live unknown for a little while, and to walk your weary way through the fields of poverty, or up the hills of affliction; for by-and-by you shall reign with Christ, for he has “made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever.” Oh!, wonderful thought for the children of God! We have Christ for our glorious representative in heaven’s courts now, and soon he will come and receive us to himself, to be with him there, to behold his glory, and to share his joy.

# Word Live – 4/22/20

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# Scripture Union – 4/22/20

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# Today in the Word – 4/22/20

# Less Is More

**Read:** [**Matthew 18:1–9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+18%3a1%e2%80%939)

### **The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven**

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

2He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

### **Causing to Stumble**

6“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! 8If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. 9And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

Did you know chickens have a social hierarchy? It’s where we get the phrase “pecking order.” The order is determined by pecking. The stronger and healthier chickens bully the weaker ones into submission, accompanied by a lot of squawking.

Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4

People have a pecking order too. On more than one occasion, the disciples argued about which of them was the greatest. In today’s passage, they asked Jesus to settle the matter. His answer shows that Jesus’ standard of greatness is radically different from ours. While we assess greatness based on prominence or achievement, for Jesus, humility is its true measure.

To make His point, Jesus called a little child to him and warned, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (v. 2). Jesus was talking about status. To become like a child means to “take the lowly position” (v. 4). Children have no power or status. Similarly, the quest for position has no place in the church. During the Last Supper, Jesus would model this by taking the role of a servant and washing the disciples’ feet. He reminded them that in His kingdom, the one who wants to be greatest will be like the youngest.

The fight over pecking order has long been a temptation for the church. One of the first conflicts in the New Testament church happened when one group of widows was given preference over another (Acts 6:1). James warned believers not to play favorites by giving the wealthy special treatment (James 2:1–9). Paul criticized the Corinthian church because the poor were being overlooked at the fellowship meal which was associated with their observance of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:20–22).

>> The greatest in God’s kingdom are not who we think. They are the ones who choose the path of humility. In the church, the truly great are those who serve like their Savior. If you aspire to greatness, find someone to serve in Jesus’ name.

### **Pray with Us**

Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Today’s Scripture is a reminder of God’s view of greatness. As you pray, ask God to show you what Jesus’ warning in Matthew 18 to “change and become like little children” means to you personally.

## BY Dr. John Koessler

# Our Daily Bread – 4/22/20

# A World of Provision

 **Read:** [**Psalm 104:10–18**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20104.10%E2%80%9318)

10He makes springs pour water into the ravines;  
    it flows between the mountains.  
11They give water to all the beasts of the field;  
    the wild donkeys quench their thirst.  
12The birds of the sky nest by the waters;  
    they sing among the branches.  
13He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;  
    the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.  
14He makes grass grow for the cattle,  
    and plants for people to cultivate—  
    bringing forth food from the earth:  
15wine that gladdens human hearts,  
    oil to make their faces shine,  
    and bread that sustains their hearts.  
16The trees of the Lord are well watered,  
    the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.  
17There the birds make their nests;  
    the stork has its home in the junipers.  
18The high mountains belong to the wild goats;  
    the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.

**Read:** [**Psalm 104:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20104.10%E2%80%9318)[**24–26**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Psalm%20104.24%E2%80%9326)

24How many are your works, Lord!  
    In wisdom you made them all;  
    the earth is full of your creatures.  
25There is the sea, vast and spacious,  
    teeming with creatures beyond number—  
    living things both large and small.  
26There the ships go to and fro,  
    and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number. [Psalm 104:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20104.25)

It’s 2 a.m. when Nadia, a farmer of sea cucumbers, walks into a roped-off pen in the ocean shallows near her Madagascar village to harvest her “crop.” The early hour doesn’t bother her. “Life was very hard before I started farming,” she says. “I didn’t have any source of income.” Now, as a member of a marine-protection program called Velondriake, meaning “to live with the sea,” Nadia sees her income growing and stabilizing. “We thank God that this project appeared,” she adds.

It appeared in large part because God’s creation provided what their project needs—a natural supply of sea life. In praise of our providing God, the psalmist wrote, “He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate” ([Psalm 104:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20104.14)). As well, “there is the sea . . . teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small” (v. 25).

It’s a wonder, indeed, how God’s wondrous creation also provides for us. The humble sea cucumber, for example, helps form a healthy marine food chain. Careful harvesting of sea cucumbers, in turn, grants Nadia and her neighbors a living wage.

Nothing is random in God’s creation. He uses it all for His glory and our good. Thus, “I will sing to the Lord all my life,” says the psalmist (v. 33). We too can praise Him today as we ponder all that He provides.

By:  [Patricia Raybon](https://odb.org/author/patriciaraybon/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

In what ways does God provide for you through His creation? How can you thank Him for that today?

O Creator God, we’re humbled by Your vast creation and all the ways You provide for our needs.

#### **Insight**

Though the psalmist in [Psalm 104](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20104) makes reference to various creatures in the earth, sky, and sea, only one creature is referenced using its proper name—Leviathan (v. 26). This is one of five times that Leviathan is mentioned in Scripture (see also [Job 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%203.8); [41:1–34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2041.1%E2%80%9334); [Psalm 74:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2074.14); [Isaiah 27:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2027.1)). Who or what was Leviathan? All biblical references are in poetic passages, and Leviathan is cast in both literal and figurative roles. In [Psalm 104](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20104), Leviathan is a sea creature: “There is the sea . . . and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there” (vv. 25–26). Similarly, in [Job 41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2041) Leviathan is depicted as a large, intimidating sea animal (vv. 31–34). On the other hand, references like [Psalm 74:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2074.14) and [Isaiah 27:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2027.1) figuratively depict Leviathan as being a threat to God’s people and being marked for overthrow by the Almighty.

# God Calling – 4/22/20

# Complain Not -- Laugh

Trust in Me. Do as I say each moment and all indeed shall be well. Follow out My commands: Divine control, unquestioning obedience -- these are the only conditions of supply being ample for your own needs and those of others.

The tasks I set you may have seemingly no connection with supply. The commands are Mine and the supply is Mine and I make My own conditions, differing in each case -- but in the case of each disciple, adapted to the individual need.

Have no fear, go forward. Joy -- radiant Joy must be yours. Change all disappointment, even if only momentary, into Joy. Change each complaint into laughter.

Rest -- Love -- Joy -- Peace -- Work, and the most powerful of these are Love and Joy.

"Serve the Lord with gladness....be thankful unto him, and bless his name." Psalm 100:2, 4

# My Utmost for His Highest – 4/23/20

# Do You Worship The Work?

We are God’s fellow workers… —[1 Corinthians 3:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Corinthians+3%3A9)

Beware of any work for God that causes or allows you to avoid concentrating on Him. A great number of Christian workers worship their work. The only concern of Christian workers should be their concentration on God. This will mean that all the other boundaries of life, whether they are mental, moral, or spiritual limits, are completely free with the freedom God gives His child; that is, a worshiping child, not a wayward one. A worker who lacks this serious controlling emphasis of concentration on God is apt to become overly burdened by his work. He is a slave to his own limits, having no freedom of his body, mind, or spirit. Consequently, he becomes burned out and defeated. There is no freedom and no delight in life at all. His nerves, mind, and heart are so overwhelmed that God’s blessing cannot rest on him.

But the opposite case is equally true– once our concentration is on God, all the limits of our life are free and under the control and mastery of God alone. There is no longer any responsibility on you for the work. The only responsibility you have is to stay in living constant touch with God, and to see that you allow nothing to hinder your cooperation with Him. The freedom that comes after sanctification is the freedom of a child, and the things that used to hold your life down are gone. But be careful to remember that you have been freed for only one thing– to be absolutely devoted to your co-Worker.

We have no right to decide where we should be placed, or to have preconceived ideas as to what God is preparing us to do. God engineers everything; and wherever He places us, our one supreme goal should be to pour out our lives in wholehearted devotion to Him in that particular work. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might…” ([Ecclesiastes 9:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes+9:10)).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

It is perilously possible to make our conceptions of God like molten lead poured into a specially designed mould, and when it is cold and hard we fling it at the heads of the religious people who don’t agree with us. Disciples Indeed, 388 R

# CCEL – 4/23/20

**The Lord was my stay.**—[PSA. 18:18.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.18.html" \l "Ps.18.18)

Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.—The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.—Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.—The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.—So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.—For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

By the grace of God I am what I am.

[Jer. 3:23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.3.html" \l "Jer.3.23). -[Psa. 18:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.18.html" \l "Ps.18.2). -[Isa. 12:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.12.html" \l "Isa.12.6).[Psa. 34:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.34.html" \l "Ps.34.7),[17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.34.html" \l "Ps.34.17). -[Deut. 33:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.33.html" \l "Deut.33.27). -[Heb. 13:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.6). -[Psa. 18:31](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.18.html" \l "Ps.18.31),[32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.18.html" \l "Ps.18.32).[I Cor. 15:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.10).

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” **[Romans 8:37](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.37)**

We go to Christ for forgiveness, and then too often look to the law for power to fight our sins. Paul thus rebukes us, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” Take your sins to Christ’s cross, for the old man can only be crucified there: we are crucified with him. The only weapon to fight sin with is the spear which pierced the side of Jesus. To give an illustration—you want to overcome an angry temper; how do you go to work? It is very possible you have never tried the right way of going to Jesus with it. How did I get salvation? I came to Jesus just as I was, and I trusted him to save me. I must kill my angry temper in the same way. It is the only way in which I can ever kill it. I must go to the cross with it, and say to Jesus, “Lord, I trust thee to deliver me from it.” This is the only way to give it a death-blow. Are you covetous? Do you feel the world entangle you? You may struggle against this evil so long as you please, but if it be your besetting sin, you will never be delivered from it in any way but by the blood of Jesus. Take it to Christ. Tell him, “Lord, I have trusted thee, and thy name is Jesus, for thou dost save thy people from their sins: Lord, this is one of my sins; save me from it!” Ordinances are nothing without Christ as a means of mortification. Your prayers, and your repentances, and your tears—the whole of them put together—are worth nothing apart from him. “None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good;” or helpless saints either. You must be conquerors through him who hath loved you, if conquerors at all. Our laurels must grow among his olives in Gethsemane.

# Word Live – 4/23/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 4/23/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 4/23/20

# An Unanswered Question

**Read:** [**Matthew 21:23–27**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21%3a23%e2%80%9327)

### **The Authority of Jesus Questioned**

23Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

24Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 25John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?”

They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ 26But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

27So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

Dale Carnegie’s 1936 book How to Win Friends and Influence People has sold more than 15 million copies, giving people advice on how to be liked. The key, says Carnegie, is to avoid arguments and not criticize. Although many people found his advice helpful, Jesus’ interactions came from a different playbook!

By what authority are you doing these things? Matthew 21:23

Jesus entered Jerusalem to the shouts of Hosanna (Matt. 21:1–11). This public praise combined with Jesus’ accusation that the money changers had turned the temple into a “den of thieves” outraged the chief priests and teachers of the law (v. 15). The temple court was used as a marketplace where pilgrims could purchase sacrificial animals and pay the temple tax. Money changers had set up tables for exchanging foreign currency, often embossed with pagan images. In a bold move, Jesus drove out those who were selling animals and overturned the money-changers tables (v. 12).

The chief priests and elders confronted Jesus: “By what authority are you doing these things?” (v. 23). They had already decided that Jesus was acting without divine authority. Their question was designed to trap Him. Jesus evaded their trap while supplying the answer to their question. “John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” (v. 25). Knowing what was in their hearts, Jesus had turned the tables on them. Recognizing John’s authority as from God would have amounted to an acknowledgment that Jesus had authority also. But a denial of John’s authority would anger the crowd.

The concerns of these religious leaders were more political than spiritual. They did not really want to know the answer to either question. They were more interested in preserving their own power.

>> Are you open to God’s answers? Sometimes we bring our requests before God, with a preconceived answer already in mind. Don’t accuse God of ignoring your questions if you have been avoiding His answers.

### **Pray with Us**

During your quiet time, a good question to ask yourself is: Do I hear God’s voice? Am I listening to His answers to my questions? May we never be like the Pharisees in today’s passage who were interested in their political goals, not in Jesus’ answers.

## BY Dr. John Koessler

# Our Daily Bread – 4/23/20

# The Saddest Goose

 **Read:** [**Ecclesiastes 4:9–12**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles%204.9%E2%80%9312)

9Two are better than one,  
    because they have a good return for their labor:  
10If either of them falls down,  
    one can help the other up.  
But pity anyone who falls  
    and has no one to help them up.  
11Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.  
    But how can one keep warm alone?  
12Though one may be overpowered,  
    two can defend themselves.  
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. [Ecclesiastes 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles%204.12)

Why is there a football in the parking lot? I wondered. But as I got closer, I realized the greyish lump wasn’t a football: it was a goose—the saddest Canada goose I’d ever seen.

Geese often congregate on the lawn near my workplace in the spring and fall. But today there was only one, its neck arced back and its head tucked beneath a wing. Where are your buddies? I thought. Poor thing was all alone. It looked so lonely, I wanted to give it a hug. (Note: don’t try this.)

I’ve rarely seen a goose completely alone like my lonesome feathered friend. Geese are notably communal, flying in a V-formation to deflect the wind. They’re made to be together.

As human beings, we were created for community too (see [Genesis 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%202.18)). And in [Ecclesiastes 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles%204.10), Solomon describes how vulnerable we are when we’re alone: “Pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.” There’s strength in numbers, he added, for “though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (v. 12).

This is just as true for us spiritually as it is physically. God never intended for us to “fly” alone, vulnerably isolated. We need relationships with each other for encouragement, refreshment, and growth (see also [1 Corinthians 12:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%2012.21)). During these extraordinary days, due to the Covid-19 virus many of us have needed to practice physical distancing to help contain the disease. But how we look forward to the time we can meet face-to-face with our local church families again!

Together, we can stand firm when life’s headwinds gust our way. Together.

By:  [Adam R. Holz](https://odb.org/author/adamholz/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What kinds of circumstances tempt you to go it alone? Who do you know who could use a word of encouragement from you?

Loving God, help us to remember that You never meant us to fly solo, but together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Today, help us to see and support someone in need of encouragement.

#### **Insight**

The author of Ecclesiastes uses practical illustrations that show the importance of companionship. Looking at verse 9, we learn that two “have a good return for their labor.” This verse points back to verse 8 which explains that it’s meaningless and miserable to toil for oneself. Not only do two have a better return, but two can help each other in multiple ways.

In the illustration of one person falling down, many commentators believe it refers to a serious fall (v. 10). In that time, it was common to dig pits and cover them to trap animals. Falling into one could cause injury and being left alone could be fatal. Additionally, roads were dangerous in the ancient Near East, and two could better defend themselves against robbers and other attacks. The author’s conclusion that “a cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (v. 12) emphasizes the need for companionship.

# God Calling – 4/23/20

# Too Much Talk

Guidance you are bound to have as you live more and more with Me. It follows without doubt.

But these times are not times when you ask to be shown and led, they are times of feeling and realizing My Presence. Does the branch continually ask the Vine to supply it with sap, to show it in what direction to grow? No, that comes naturally from the very union with the Vine, and I said, "I am the true vine, ye are the branches."

From the branches hand the choice grapes, giving joy and nourishment to all, but no branch could think that the fruit, the grapes, were of its shaping and making.

No! the grapes are the fruit of the Vine, the Parent-Plant.  The work of the branch is to provide a channel for the life-flow.

So, My children, union with Me is the one great overwhelming necessity. All else follows so naturally, and union with Me may be the result of just consciousness of My Presence. Be not too ready to speak to others.  Never make yourselves do this.

Pray always that the need may be apparent, if you are to do this, and the guidance very plain. My Spirit has been driven out by the words of men.  Words, words, words.  Many have called Me Lord, Lord, who have not done the things that I said.

Discourage too much talk. Deeds live, and re-echo down the ages -- words perish. As Paul: Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, . . . And have not charity, I am nothing....

Remember that rarely to the human heart do I speak in words. Man will see Me in My works done through you, meet Me in the atmosphere of Love and self-effacement.  Do not feel that you have to speak

When man ceased to commune with his God simply and naturally, he took refuge in words—words.  Babel resulted.  Then God wanted to do away with man from the earth.  Rely less on words.  Always remember that speech is of the senses.  So make it your servant, never your Master.

"And that ye study to be quiet." 1 Thessalonians 4:11

# My Utmost for His Highest – 4/24/20

# The Warning Against Desiring Spiritual Success

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Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you… —[Luke 10:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+10%3A20)

Worldliness is not the trap that most endangers us as Christian workers; nor is it sin. The trap we fall into is extravagantly desiring spiritual success; that is, success measured by, and patterned after, the form set by this religious age in which we now live. Never seek after anything other than the approval of God, and always be willing to go “outside the camp, bearing His reproach” ([Hebrews 13:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13:13)). In [Luke 10:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+10:20), Jesus told the disciples not to rejoice in successful service, and yet this seems to be the one thing in which most of us do rejoice. We have a commercialized view— we count how many souls have been saved and sanctified, we thank God, and then we think everything is all right. Yet our work only begins where God’s grace has laid the foundation. Our work is not to save souls, but to disciple them. Salvation and sanctification are the work of God’s sovereign grace, and our work as His disciples is to disciple others’ lives until they are totally yielded to God. One life totally devoted to God is of more value to Him than one hundred lives which have been simply awakened by His Spirit. As workers for God, we must reproduce our own kind spiritually, and those lives will be God’s testimony to us as His workers. God brings us up to a standard of life through His grace, and we are responsible for reproducing that same standard in others.

Unless the worker lives a life that “is hidden with Christ in God” ([Colossians 3:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3:3)), he is apt to become an irritating dictator to others, instead of an active, living disciple. Many of us are dictators, dictating our desires to individuals and to groups. But Jesus never dictates to us in that way. Whenever our Lord talked about discipleship, He always prefaced His words with an “if,” never with the forceful or dogmatic statement— “You must.” Discipleship carries with it an option.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Jesus Christ can afford to be misunderstood; we cannot. Our weakness lies in always wanting to vindicate ourselves.  
The Place of Help

# CCEL – 4/24/20

**The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken.**—[GEN. 21:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.21.html" \l "Gen.21.1)

Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.—David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.—God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.—I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.—There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.

He is faithful that promised.—Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?—Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away—The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

[Psa. 62:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.62.html" \l "Ps.62.8). -[I Sam. 30:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iSam.30.html" \l "iSam.30.6). -[Gen. 50:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.50.html" \l "Gen.50.24). -[Acts. 7:34](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.7.html" \l "Acts.7.34),[36](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.7.html" \l "Acts.7.36). -[Josh. 21:45](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Josh.21.html" \l "Josh.21.45).[Heb. 10:23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.23). -[Num. 23:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Num.23.html" \l "Num.23.19). -[Matt. 24:35](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.24.html" \l "Matt.24.35). -[Isa. 40:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.40.html" \l "Isa.40.8).

“And because of all this we make a sure covenant.” **[Nehemiah 9:38](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Neh.9.html" \l "Neh.9.38)**

There are many occasions in our experience when we may very rightly, and with benefit, renew our covenant with God. After recovery from sickness when, like Hezekiah, we have had a new term of years added to our life, we may fitly do it. After any deliverance from trouble, when our joys bud forth anew, let us again visit the foot of the cross, and renew our consecration. Especially, let us do this after any sin which has grieved the Holy Spirit, or brought dishonour upon the cause of God; let us then look to that blood which can make us whiter than snow, and again offer ourselves unto the Lord. We should not only let our troubles confirm our dedication to God, but our prosperity should do the same. If we ever meet with occasions which deserve to be called “crowning mercies” then, surely, if he hath crowned us, we ought also to crown our God; let us bring forth anew all the jewels of the divine regalia which have been stored in the jewel-closet of our heart, and let our God sit upon the throne of our love, arrayed in royal apparel. If we would learn to profit by our prosperity, we should not need so much adversity. If we would gather from a kiss all the good it might confer upon us, we should not so often smart under the rod. Have we lately received some blessing which we little expected? Has the Lord put our feet in a large room? Can we sing of mercies multiplied? Then this is the day to put our hand upon the horns of the altar, and say, “Bind me here, my God; bind me here with cords, even forever.” Inasmuch as we need the fulfilment of new promises from God, let us offer renewed prayers that our old vows may not be dishonoured. Let us this morning make with him a sure covenant, because of the pains of Jesus which for the last month we have been considering with gratitude.

# Word Live – 4/24/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 4/24/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 4/24/20

# Surprise Return

**Read:** [**Matthew 24:36–44**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+24%3a36%e2%80%9344)

### **The Day and Hour Unknown**

36“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+24%3a36%e2%80%9344" \l "fen-NIV-23994a" \o "See footnote a)] but only the Father. 37As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

42“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 24:36](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+24%3a36%e2%80%9344#en-NIV-23994) Some manuscripts do not have nor the Son.

“Are we there yet?” Any parent who has taken the family on a long road trip has heard this question. Fortunately, modern GPS technology has made the answer simple to find. If only it made the waiting easier to bear!

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Matthew 24:42

The disciples didn’t find waiting easy either. They were looking forward to the arrival of the kingdom of God. During the week leading up to His crucifixion, Jesus taught them about the signs that would signal the end of the age. Their question was not “Are we there yet?” but “When will these things happen?” (Matt. 24:3). Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which took place in 70 A.D., sparking questions about the sign of His coming and the end of the age. Jesus revealed several signs (vv. 4–35). He described a time of great tribulation and the rise of “the abomination that causes desolation” predicted by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 9:24–27; 11:31; 12:11). At the close of this period the “sign of the Son of Man” will appear: “And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30).

It is not surprising that the disciples wanted to know exactly when all these things were to take place. After all, they had a vested interest in Jesus’ second coming. Jesus promised that when He returned they too would inherit a kingdom (vv. 34–40). But the Savior must have shocked them when He said that He did not know the day or the hour (v. 36). Since omniscience is an attribute of Jesus’ divine nature, this limitation of His knowledge must have been voluntary.

>> In an age where Christians are sometimes sharply divided about the timing of events that lead up to the Savior’s second coming, we should take note of what Jesus says we can know. Jesus does not want us to speculate but to stay alert.

### **Pray with Us**

Talking about Christ’s return, today’s key verse says, “Keep watch.” Jesus, thank you for your promise to come back and for revealing the signs of your return to your disciples. Help us to watch for the signs and stay alert.

## BY Dr. John Koessler

# Our Daily Bread – 4/24/20

# Divinely Aligned

 **Read:** [**Romans 11:33–36**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2011.33%E2%80%9336)

### **Doxology**

33Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+11%3A33%E2%80%9336&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28243a)] knowledge of God!  
    How unsearchable his judgments,  
    and his paths beyond tracing out!  
34“Who has known the mind of the Lord?  
    Or who has been his counselor?”[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+11%3A33%E2%80%9336&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28244b)]  
35“Who has ever given to God,  
    that God should repay them?”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+11%3A33%E2%80%9336&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28245c)]  
36For from him and through him and for him are all things.  
    To him be the glory forever! Amen.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Romans 11:33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+11%3A33%E2%80%9336&version=NIV#en-NIV-28243) Or riches and the wisdom and the
2. [Romans 11:34](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+11%3A33%E2%80%9336&version=NIV#en-NIV-28244) Isaiah 40:13
3. [Romans 11:35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+11%3A33%E2%80%9336&version=NIV#en-NIV-28245) Job 41:11

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! [Romans 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2011.33)

I was deeply troubled and woke in the night to pace the floor and pray. Frankly, my attitude was not one of prayerful submission to God, but one of questioning and anger. Finding no release, I sat and stared out a large window at the night sky. I was unexpectedly drawn to focus on Orion’s Belt—those three perfectly arranged stars often visible on clear nights. I knew just enough about astronomy to understand that those three stars were hundreds of light years apart.

I realized the closer I could be to those stars, the less they would appear to be aligned. Yet from my distant perspective, they looked carefully configured in the heavens. At that moment, I realized I was too close to my life to see what God sees. In His big picture, everything is in perfect alignment.

The apostle Paul, as he completes a summary of the ultimate purposes of God, breaks into a hymn of praise ([Romans 11:33–36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2011.33%E2%80%9336)). His words lift our gaze to our sovereign God, whose ways are beyond our limited ability to understand or trace (v. 33). Yet the One who holds all things together in the heavens and on earth is intimately and lovingly involved with every detail of our lives ([Matthew 6:25–34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%206.25%E2%80%9334); [Colossians 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%201.16)).

Even when things seem confusing, God’s divine plans are unfolding for our good and for God’s honor and glory.

By:  [Evan Morgan](https://odb.org/author/evanmorgan/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What questions do you long for God to answer? How can you find rest and release through faith that His perspective of our lives is in perfect alignment with His ultimate purposes?

Dear God, remind me that Your purposes and plans for my life are beyond my understanding, and help me rest in You.

#### **Insight**

Paul wasn’t the first author in the Bible to speak of God’s inscrutability—that He’s beyond comprehension ([Romans 11:33–36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2011.33%E2%80%9336)). Two thousand years earlier, Job (believed to have lived at about the time of Abraham) asked, “Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?” ([Job 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2011.7)). Isaiah also acknowledged that God is beyond human understanding ([Isaiah 55:8–9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2055.8%E2%80%939)). But God wanted us to know Him and said, “I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord” ([Jeremiah 24:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2024.7)). Years later, John the apostle told us how we know Him: “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known” ([John 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%201.18)). To know Jesus is to know God. Jesus said, “If you knew me, you would know my Father also” (8:19; see also 17:3).

# God Calling – 4/24/20

# I Go Before

You can never perish, My children, because within you is the Life of Life. The Life that down the ages has kept My servants, in peril, in adversity, in sorrow.

Once you are born of the Spirit, that is your Life's breath. You must never doubt, never worry, but step by step, the way to freedom must be trodden. See that you walk it with Me.

This means no worry, no anxiety, but it does not mean no effort. When My Disciples told Me that they had toiled all night and taken nothing, I did not fill the boat with fishes without effort on their part. No! My Command stood. "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."

Their lives were endangered, the ship nearly sank, the help of their fellows had to be summoned, and there were broken nets to mend. Any one of these troubles might have made them feel My help was not for them. And yet as they sat on the shore and mended those nets, they would see My Love and Care.

Man rises by effort

The man who reaches the mountain height by the help of train or car has learned no climber's lesson. But remember this does not mean no Guide -- this does not mean that My Spirit is not supplying wisdom and strength. How often, when sometimes you little know it, do I go before you to prepare the way, to soften the heart here, to overrule there.

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." John 10:28

# My Utmost for His Highest – 4/25/20

# “Ready in Season”

Be ready in season and out of season. —[2 Timothy 4:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Timothy+4%3A2)

Many of us suffer from the unbalanced tendency to “be ready” only “out of season.” The season does not refer to time; it refers to us. This verse says, “Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season.” In other words, we should “be ready” whether we feel like it or not. If we do only what we feel inclined to do, some of us would never do anything. There are some people who are totally unemployable in the spiritual realm. They are spiritually feeble and weak, and they refuse to do anything unless they are supernaturally inspired. The proof that our relationship is right with God is that we do our best whether we feel inspired or not.

One of the worst traps a Christian worker can fall into is to become obsessed with his own exceptional moments of inspiration. When the Spirit of God gives you a time of inspiration and insight, you tend to say, “Now that I’ve experienced this moment, I will always be like this for God.” No, you will not, and God will make sure of that. Those times are entirely the gift of God. You cannot give them to yourself when you choose. If you say you will only be at your best for God, as during those exceptional times, you actually become an intolerable burden on Him. You will never do anything unless God keeps you consciously aware of His inspiration to you at all times. If you make a god out of your best moments, you will find that God will fade out of your life, never to return until you are obedient in the work He has placed closest to you, and until you have learned not to be obsessed with those exceptional moments He has given you.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

No one could have had a more sensitive love in human relationship than Jesus; and yet He says there are times when love to father and mother must be hatred in comparison to our love for Him.   So Send I You, 1301 L

# CCEL – 4/25/20

Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins—[MATT. 1:21.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.1.html" \l "Matt.1.21)

Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.—That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.—He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.—He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, . . . to give repentance.—Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.—Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

[I John 3:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.3.html" \l "iJohn.3.5). -[I Pet. 2:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.2.html" \l "iPet.2.24). -[Heb. 7:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.7.html" \l "Heb.7.25).[Isa. 53:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.53.html" \l "Isa.53.5). -[Luke 24:46,47](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.24.html" \l "Luke.24.46). -[Heb. 9:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.9.html" \l "Heb.9.26).[Acts 5:31](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.5.html#Acts.5.31). -[Acts 13:38,39](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.13.html" \l "Acts.13.38). -[I John 2:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.12).

“Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away.” **[Song of Solomon 2:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.2.html" \l "Song.2.10)**

Lo, I hear the voice of my Beloved! He speaks to me! Fair weather is smiling upon the face of the earth, and he would not have me spiritually asleep while nature is all around me awaking from her winter’s rest. He bids me “Rise up,” and well he may; for I have long enough been lying among the pots of worldliness. He is risen, I am risen in him, why then should I cleave unto the dust? From lower loves, desires, pursuits, and aspirations, I would rise towards him. He calls me by the sweet title of “My love,” and counts me fair; this is a good argument for my rising. If he has thus exalted me, and thinks me thus comely, how can I linger in the tents of Kedar and find congenial associates among the sons of men? He bids me “Come away.” Further and further from everything selfish, grovelling, worldly, sinful, he calls me; yea, from the outwardly religious world which knows him not, and has no sympathy with the mystery of the higher life, he calls me. “Come away” has no harsh sound in it to my ear, for what is there to hold me in this wilderness of vanity and sin? O my Lord, would that I could come away, but I am taken among the thorns, and cannot escape from them as I would. I would, if it were possible, have neither eyes, nor ears, nor heart for sin. Thou callest me to thyself by saying “Come away,” and this is a melodious call indeed. To come to thee is to come home from exile, to come to land out of the raging storm, to come to rest after long labour, to come to the goal of my desires and the summit of my wishes. But Lord, how can a stone rise, how can a lump of clay come away from the horrible pit? O raise me, draw me. Thy grace can do it. Send forth thy Holy Spirit to kindle sacred flames of love in my heart, and I will continue to rise until I leave life and time behind me, and indeed come away.

# Word Live – 4/25/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 4/25/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 4/25/20

# A Disturbing Dinner

**Read:** [**Matthew 26:17–30**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26%3a17%e2%80%9330)

### **The Last Supper**

17On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

18He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” 19So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

20When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

22They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”

23Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

25Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?”

Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

26While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

27Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28This is my blood of the[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26%3a17%e2%80%9330#fen-NIV-24083a)] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

30When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 26:28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26%3a17%e2%80%9330#en-NIV-24083) Some manuscripts the new

Most church congregations follow a familiar order of service. We usually know the number of songs we will sing and when we will pray. We know when to stand and when the pastor will begin the sermon. When the order is changed, some people are bothered.

This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. Luke 22:19

The Passover service also followed a familiar pattern. It must have seemed strange when Jesus began to go “off script” during His last Passover with the disciples. Most disturbing was the news that one of them would betray Him (v. 22). Jesus had predicted His betrayal more than once (Matt. 17:22; 20:18). Now He revealed that the betrayer was seated at the table with them. When all the disciples denied that such a thing was possible, Jesus repeated His prediction along with this warning: “But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born” (v. 24). Judas’s denial was a bald-faced lie. He had already made the arrangements to hand Jesus over (v. 14).

Jesus emphasized both God’s sovereignty and the moral responsibility of the one who would betray Him. Scripture makes it clear that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are in harmony. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter explained: “This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (Acts 2:23). The other major change during the meal was the shift from the Passover lamb to Jesus and His suffering. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

>> Are you trusting in Jesus’ blood to cover the guilt of your sins? One important distinctive of Christianity is that we do not earn our salvation. We cannot possibly do enough good to cancel out the bad. Instead, we marvel at the fact that Jesus paid the price for our sins. Thank Him today!

### **Pray with Us**

Today’s devotional reminds us to praise Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We come to Him today with a prayer of thanksgiving for His sacrifice of paying the price for our sins. What a Savior!

## BY Dr. John Koessler

# Our Daily Bread – 4/25/20

# Run Toward Challenge

 **Read:** [**2 Kings 6:8–17**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Kings%206.8%E2%80%9317)

### **Elisha Traps Blinded Arameans**

8Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, “I will set up my camp in such and such a place.”

9The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: “Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.” 10So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

11This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, “Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?”

12“None of us, my lord the king,” said one of his officers, “but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.”

13“Go, find out where he is,” the king ordered, “so I can send men and capture him.” The report came back: “He is in Dothan.” 14Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

15When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked.

16“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

17And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

He looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. [2 Kings 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Kings%206.17)

Tom chased the young men who were stealing his poor friend’s bike. He didn’t have a plan. He only knew he needed to get it back. To his surprise, the three thieves looked his way, dropped the bike and backed away. Tom was both relieved and impressed with himself as he picked up the bike and turned around. That’s when he saw Jeff, his muscular friend who had been trailing close behind.

Elisha’s servant panicked when he saw his town surrounded by an enemy army. He ran to Elisha, “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” Elisha told him to relax. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then God opened the servant’s eyes, and he “saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (vv. 15–17).

You may also find yourself in some dicey situations. You may have to risk your reputation, and perhaps even your security, because you’re determined to do what’s right. You may lose sleep wondering how it will all turn out. Remember, you’re not alone. You don’t have to be stronger or smarter than the challenge before you. Jesus is with you, and His power is greater than all rivals. Today, many believers are on the front lines in the battle against the Covid-19 virus. May we pray for them and others who are running toward the challenge. Ask yourself Paul’s question, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” ([Romans 8:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%208.31)). Really, who? No one. Run toward your challenge, with God.

By:  [Mike Wittmer](https://odb.org/author/mwittmer/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What wakes you up at night? How can you give your worries to God?

Help me, Jesus, to truly see that You’re bigger than any problem facing me today. Thank You for Your everlasting presence!

For help, read Overcoming Worry at [discoveryseries.org/q0711.](https://discoveryseries.org/q0711.)

#### **Insight**

Today’s passage describes the fascinating reality of a world with both a visible physical dimension and an invisible (most of the time) spiritual dimension. The servant panicked because he couldn’t see the army that surrounded them—“horses and chariots of fire all around” ([2 Kings 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Kings%206.17)). This contrasts to Elisha’s calm response as he asked God to open the servant’s eyes. The servant’s response to his new vision isn’t recorded. The author shows the reader, without telling us specifically, what can happen when we focus on only one part of reality. When we’re afraid, we need to remember that we don’t always see how God is helping and protecting us.

# God Calling – 4/25/20

# Bless Your Enemies

Say often, "God bless . . . ," of any whom you find in disharmony with you, or whom you desire to help. Say it, willing that showers of blessings and joy and success may fall upon them.

Leave to Me that necessary correcting or training; you must only desire joy and blessing for them. At present your prayers are that they should be taught and corrected.

Oh! If My children would leave My work to Me and occupy themselves with the task I give them. Love, love, love. Love will break down all your difficulties. Love will build up all your successes.

God the destroyer of evil, God the creator of good -- is Love. To Love one another is to use God in your life. To use God in your life is to bring into manifestation all harmony, beauty, joy, and happiness.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Matthew 5:44

# My Utmost for His Highest – 4/26/20

# The Supreme Climb

 Take now your son…and offer him…as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. —[Genesis 22:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Genesis+22%3A2)

A person’s character determines how he interprets God’s will (see [Psalm 18:25-26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+18:25-26)). Abraham interpreted God’s command to mean that he had to kill his son, and he could only leave this traditional belief behind through the pain of a tremendous ordeal. God could purify his faith in no other way. If we obey what God says according to our sincere belief, God will break us from those traditional beliefs that misrepresent Him. There are many such beliefs which must be removed– for example, that God removes a child because his mother loves him too much. That is the devil’s lie and a travesty on the true nature of God! If the devil can hinder us from taking the supreme climb and getting rid of our wrong traditional beliefs about God, he will do so. But if we will stay true to God, God will take us through an ordeal that will serve to bring us into a better knowledge of Himself.

The great lesson to be learned from Abraham’s faith in God is that he was prepared to do anything for God. He was there to obey God, no matter what contrary belief of his might be violated by his obedience. Abraham was not devoted to his own convictions or else he would have slain Isaac and said that the voice of the angel was actually the voice of the devil. That is the attitude of a fanatic. If you will remain true to God, God will lead you directly through every barrier and right into the inner chamber of the knowledge of Himself. But you must always be willing to come to the point of giving up your own convictions and traditional beliefs. Don’t ask God to test you. Never declare as Peter did that you are willing to do anything, even “to go …both to prison and to death” ([Luke 22:33](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+22:33)). Abraham did not make any such statement— he simply remained true to God, and God purified his faith.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We must keep ourselves in touch, not with theories, but with people, and never get out of touch with human beings, if we are going to use the word of God skilfully amongst them.  Workmen of God, 1341 L

# CCEL – 4/26/20

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.—[SONG 2:6.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.2.html" \l "Song.2.6)

Underneath are the everlasting arms.—When [Peter] saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?—The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.—Casting all your care upon Him, for he careth for you.—He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.

They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all.

[Deut. 33:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.33.html#Deut.33.27). -[Matt. 14:30,31](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.14.html" \l "Matt.14.30). -[Psa. 37:23,24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.37.html" \l "Ps.37.23).[Deut. 33:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.33.html" \l "Deut.33.12). -[I Pet. 5:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.5.html" \l "iPet.5.7). -[Zech. 2:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Zech.2.html" \l "Zech.2.8).[John 10:28,29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.10.html" \l "John.10.28).

“This do in remembrance of me.” **[1 Corinthians 11:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.11.html" \l "iCor.11.24)**

It seems then, that Christians may forget Christ! There could be no need for this loving exhortation, if there were not a fearful supposition that our memories might prove treacherous. Nor is this a bare supposition: it is, alas! too well confirmed in our experience, not as a possibility, but as a lamentable fact. It appears almost impossible that those who have been redeemed by the blood of the dying Lamb, and loved with an everlasting love by the eternal Son of God, should forget that gracious Saviour; but, if startling to the ear, it is, alas! too apparent to the eye to allow us to deny the crime. Forget him who never forgot us! Forget him who poured his blood forth for our sins! Forget him who loved us even to the death! Can it be possible? Yes, it is not only possible, but conscience confesses that it is too sadly a fault with all of us, that we suffer him to be as a wayfaring man tarrying but for a night. He whom we should make the abiding tenant of our memories is but a visitor therein. The cross where one would think that memory would linger, and unmindfulness would be an unknown intruder, is desecrated by the feet of forgetfulness. Does not your conscience say that this is true? Do you not find yourselves forgetful of Jesus? Some creature steals away your heart, and you are unmindful of him upon whom your affection ought to be set. Some earthly business engrosses your attention when you should fix your eye steadily upon the cross. It is the incessant turmoil of the world, the constant attraction of earthly things which takes away the soul from Christ. While memory too well preserves a poisonous weed, it suffereth the rose of Sharon to wither. Let us charge ourselves to bind a heavenly forget-me-not about our hearts for Jesus our Beloved, and, whatever else we let slip, let us hold fast to him.

# Word Live – 4/26/20

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# Scripture Union – 4/26/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 4/26/20

# A Surprising Silence

**Read:** [**Matthew 27:11–31**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+27%3a11%e2%80%9331)

### **Jesus Before Pilate**

11Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

12When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. 13Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” 14But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

15Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. 16At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+27%3a11%e2%80%9331#fen-NIV-24146a)] Barabbas. 17So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” 18For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

19While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.”

20But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

21“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor.

“Barabbas,” they answered.

22“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify him!”

23“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

24When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

25All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!”

26Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

### **The Soldiers Mock Jesus**

27Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. 30They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 27:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+27%3a11%e2%80%9331#en-NIV-24146) Many manuscripts do not have Jesus; also in verse 17.

According to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly, everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Most of us believe it is a virtue to stand up for ourselves, especially when we believe our rights have been violated.

As a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. Isaiah 53:7

Jesus was different. When invited to defend Himself before Pontius Pilate, Jesus was silent (v. 14). His answer, when Pilate asked Him directly whether He was the king of the Jews, seems a little ambiguous to modern ears (v. 11). According to the Greek text, Jesus’ reply was “you have said” or “you say.” But this was the same answer He gave to the high priest Caiaphas who understood it to mean “yes” (Matt. 26:63–64). It is also the answer given to Judas when he responded to the Savior’s prediction of his betrayal by saying, “Surely you don’t mean me?” (Matt. 26:25).

Pilate represented Rome at the trial. He had full authority and seemed inclined to release Jesus. It was his custom to release a prisoner at Passover, and he invited the assembled crowd to choose between Jesus and Barabbas. Luke’s Gospel says Barabbas was involved in an armed uprising and had murdered someone. The chief priests influenced the crowd to choose Barabbas instead of Jesus (Mark 15:11).

Pilate’s wife sent a message, “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him” (Matt. 27:19). Matthew does not identify the source of the dream, but previous dreams mentioned in his Gospel name God as their source. The wife’s counsel serves as another evidence of Jesus’ innocence. Under pressure from the religious leaders and the crowd, Pilate ignored her advice.

>> Someone once said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” In Jesus’ case, the only One who could truly be called good said nothing so that we would triumph over sin. Rejoice in this today.

### **Pray with Us**

So far this month we’ve read about many surprising words and deeds of our Savior. Today, we read about His surprising silence at His trial and thank Him that He said nothing so sin would be defeated.

## BY Dr. John Koessler

# Our Daily Bread – 4/26/20

# Our Father Sings

 **Read:** [**Zephaniah 3:14–20**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%203.14%E2%80%9320)

14Sing, Daughter Zion;  
    shout aloud, Israel!  
Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,  
    Daughter Jerusalem!  
15The Lord has taken away your punishment,  
    he has turned back your enemy.  
The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you;  
    never again will you fear any harm.  
16On that day  
    they will say to Jerusalem,  
“Do not fear, Zion;  
    do not let your hands hang limp.  
17The Lord your God is with you,  
    the Mighty Warrior who saves.  
He will take great delight in you;  
    in his love he will no longer rebuke you,  
    but will rejoice over you with singing.”

18“I will remove from you  
    all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals,  
    which is a burden and reproach for you.  
19At that time I will deal  
    with all who oppressed you.  
I will rescue the lame;  
    I will gather the exiles.  
I will give them praise and honor  
    in every land where they have suffered shame.  
20At that time I will gather you;  
    at that time I will bring you home.  
I will give you honor and praise  
    among all the peoples of the earth  
when I restore your fortunes[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zephaniah+3%3A14%E2%80%9320&version=NIV#fen-NIV-22841a)]  
    before your very eyes,”  
says the Lord.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Zephaniah 3:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zephaniah+3%3A14%E2%80%9320&version=NIV#en-NIV-22841) Or I bring back your captives

He . . . will rejoice over you with singing. [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%203.17)

Dandy loves encouraging people by singing to them. One day we were having lunch at his favorite restaurant, and he noticed the waitress was having a hard day. He asked her a few questions and then started quietly singing a catchy, upbeat song to cheer her up. “Well, kind sir, you just made my day. Thank you so much,” she said with a big smile, as she wrote down our food order.

When we open the book of Zephaniah, we find that God loves to sing. The prophet masterfully drew a picture with his words in which he described God as a musician who loves to sing for and with His children. He wrote that God “will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing” (3:17). God promised to be present forever with those who have been transformed by His mercy. But it doesn’t stop there! He invites and joins in with His people to “be glad and rejoice with all your heart” (v. 14).

We can only imagine the day when we’ll be together with God and with all those who’ve put their trust in Jesus as their Savior. How amazing it will be to hear our heavenly Father sing songs for and with us and experience His love, approval, and acceptance.

By:  [Estera Pirosca Escobar](https://odb.org/author/esteraescobar/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How can you celebrate God’s love for you? What song is He singing over you and with you today?

Heavenly Father, we know that because of our allegiance to Jesus, You not only accept us but celebrate with us and delight in us as Your children. Thank You for Your love.

#### **Insight**

It’s not uncommon for Bible readers to scratch their heads when they encounter the brief but powerful prophecy of Zephaniah—the ninth among the twelve shorter prophetic writings (Minor Prophets) of the Old Testament. Zephaniah (whose name means “the Lord hides” or “he whom the Lord hides”) prophesied during the kingship of Josiah (640–609 bc; [Zephaniah 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%201.1)). The dominant theme is one of far-reaching judgment—judgment that included God’s people: “ ‘When I destroy all mankind on the face of the earth,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all who live in Jerusalem’ ” (1:3–4). The term “day of the Lord” (1:7)—a time of widespread divine reckoning against evil—is used seven times in the book, more than in any other Old Testament prophet. However, the book ends on a note of hope and rescue (3:14–20).

To gain an overview of the book of Zephaniah visit [bit.ly/337DURd](https://bit.ly/337DURd) and scroll down to the video on Zephaniah.

# God Calling – 4/26/20

# I Make The Opportunities

Never doubt. Have no fear. Watch the faintest tremor of fear, and stop all work, everything, and rest before Me until you are joyful and strong again

Deal in the same way with all tired feelings. I was weary too, when on earth, and I separated Myself from My Disciples, and sat and rested on the well. Rested -- and then it was that the Samaritan woman was helped.

Times of withdrawal for rest always precede fresh miracle-working.  Learn of Me.  To accept the limitations of human flesh is to be subject, except as far as sin is concerned, to the same conditions as man.

I had to teach renewal of Spirit -- force rest of body to My Disciples. Then, as your Example, I lay with My Head on a pillow, asleep in the boat. It was not, as they thought, indifference. They cried, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" and I had to teach them that ceaseless activity was no part of My Father's plan.

When Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me," he did not mean that he was to do all things and then rely on Me to find strength. He meant that for all I told him to do he could rely on My supplying the strength.

My Work in the world has been hindered by work, work, work. Many a tireless nervous body has driven a spirit. The spirit should be the master always, and just simply and naturally use the body as need should arise. Rest in Me.

Do not seek to work for Me. Never make opportunities. Live with Me and for Me. I do the work and I make the opportunities.

"I can of mine own self do nothing." John 5:30

# My Utmost for His Highest – 4/27/20

# What Do You Want?

 Do you seek great things for yourself? —[Jeremiah 45:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Jeremiah+45%3A5)

Are you seeking great things for yourself, instead of seeking to be a great person? God wants you to be in a much closer relationship with Himself than simply receiving His gifts— He wants you to get to know Him. Even some large thing we want is only incidental; it comes and it goes. But God never gives us anything incidental. There is nothing easier than getting into the right relationship with God, unless it is not God you seek, but only what He can give you.

If you have only come as far as asking God for things, you have never come to the point of understanding the least bit of what surrender really means. You have become a Christian based on your own terms. You protest, saying, “I asked God for the Holy Spirit, but He didn’t give me the rest and the peace I expected.” And instantly God puts His finger on the reason– you are not seeking the Lord at all; you are seeking something for yourself. Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you…” ([Matthew 7:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7:7)). Ask God for what you want and do not be concerned about asking for the wrong thing, because as you draw ever closer to Him, you will cease asking for things altogether. “Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him” ([Matthew 6:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6:8)). Then why should you ask? So that you may get to know Him.

Are you seeking great things for yourself? Have you said, “Oh, Lord, completely fill me with your Holy Spirit”? If God does not, it is because you are not totally surrendered to Him; there is something you still refuse to do. Are you prepared to ask yourself what it is you want from God and why you want it? God always ignores your present level of completeness in favor of your ultimate future completeness. He is not concerned about making you blessed and happy right now, but He’s continually working out His ultimate perfection for you— “…that they may be one just as We are one…” ([John 17:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17:22)).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Beware of pronouncing any verdict on the life of faith if you are not living it. Not Knowing Whither, 900 R

# CCEL – 4/27/20

Brethren, the time is short.—[I COR. 7:29.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.7.html" \l "iCor.7.29)

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.—The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.—As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. Death is swallowed up in victory.—Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.—To live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Cast not away . . . your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.—The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.—The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

[Job. 14:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.14.html" \l "Job.14.1). -[I John 2:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.17). -[I Cor. 15:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.22),[54](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.54). -[Rom. 14:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.14.html" \l "Rom.14.8). -[Phi. 1:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html" \l "Phil.1.21).[Heb. 10:35-37](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.35). -[Rom. 13:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.13.html" \l "Rom.13.12). -[I Pet. 4:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.4.html" \l "iPet.4.7).

“God, even our own God.” **[Psalm 67:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.67.html" \l "Ps.67.6)**

It is strange how little use we make of the spiritual blessings which God gives us, but it is stranger still how little use we make of God himself. Though he is “our own God,” we apply ourselves but little to him, and ask but little of him. How seldom do we ask counsel at the hands of the Lord! How often do we go about our business, without seeking his guidance! In our troubles how constantly do we strive to bear our burdens ourselves, instead of casting them upon the Lord, that he may sustain us! This is not because we may not, for the Lord seems to say, “I am thine, soul, come and make use of me as thou wilt; thou mayst freely come to my store, and the oftener the more welcome.” It is our own fault if we make not free with the riches of our God. Then, since thou hast such a friend, and he invites thee, draw from him daily. Never want whilst thou hast a God to go to; never fear or faint whilst thou hast God to help thee; go to thy treasure and take whatever thou needest—there is all that thou canst want. Learn the divine skill of making God all things to thee. He can supply thee with all, or, better still, he can be to thee instead of all. Let me urge thee, then, to make use of thy God. Make use of him in prayer. Go to him often, because he is thy God. O, wilt thou fail to use so great a privilege? Fly to him, tell him all thy wants. Use him constantly by faith at all times. If some dark providence has beclouded thee, use thy God as a “sun;” if some strong enemy has beset thee, find in Jehovah a “shield,” for he is a sun and shield to his people. If thou hast lost thy way in the mazes of life, use him as a “guide,” for he will direct thee. Whatever thou art, and wherever thou art, remember God is just what thou wantest, and just where thou wantest, and that he can do all thou wantest.

# Word Live – 4/27/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 4/27/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 4/27/20

# Undeserved Insults

**Read:** [**Matthew 27:32–44**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+27%3a32%e2%80%9344)

### **The Crucifixion of Jesus**

32As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. 33They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). 34There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. 35When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37Above his head they placed the written charge against him: this is jesus, the king of the jews.

38Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” 41In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42“He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” 44In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

A pastor was complaining to a friend about unfair criticism from members of his congregation. His friend smiled and said, “Worse things have been said about better people.” Unfair criticism is hard to take. Imagine what it must have been like for Jesus to hear the taunts and criticisms of those who watched Him being crucified!

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Isaiah 53:7

The insults began with the mocking of Roman soldiers. This was done in front of the entire cohort, with as many as 600 present. They dressed Jesus as if He were a king and placed a crown of thorns on His head (vv. 28–29). The soldiers pretended to pay homage to Him, striking and spitting on Him. As the prophet predicted, “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth” (Isa. 53:7). Jesus could have called upon entire legion of angels to defend Him (Matt. 26:53). He had the power to destroy those who mocked Him with a single word. Yet He remained silent.

The Roman soldiers forced a man named Simon to carry the cross for Jesus. This was pragmatic rather than merciful. Jesus was so weak He was unable to carry it Himself. Simon was from Cyrene, a North African city. Mark’s account of these events also names Simon’s two sons, Alexander and Rufus. The fact that the New Testament includes this much detail about someone who was merely a passerby at the crucifixion suggests that Simon became a believer and was known to the church.

On the cross, Jesus was subjected to additional taunts. Even the criminals who were being crucified “heaped insults” on Him (v. 44). According to Luke, one of the criminals repented and asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom (Luke 23:41–43).

>> We are often very quick to defend ourselves. We easily take offense when slighted. Yet the only One who truly had a right to criticize held His tongue. In an age where people are easily outraged, consider silence, which can often be more eloquent than argument.

### **Pray with Us**

As we study Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, we encourage you to read the whole chapter of Isaiah 53 during your prayer time. We marvel at the beautiful words of the prophet Isaiah and thank God for the Messianic prophesies.

## BY Dr. John Koessler

# Our Daily Bread – 4/27/20

# Through the Waters

 **Read:** [**Isaiah 43:1–7**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2043.1%E2%80%937)

### **Israel’s Only Savior**

43 But now, this is what the Lord says—  
    he who created you, Jacob,  
    he who formed you, Israel:  
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
    I have summoned you by name; you are mine.  
2When you pass through the waters,  
    I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
    they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
    you will not be burned;  
    the flames will not set you ablaze.  
3For I am the Lord your God,  
    the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;  
I give Egypt for your ransom,  
    Cush[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+43%3A1%E2%80%937&version=NIV#fen-NIV-18509a)] and Seba in your stead.  
4Since you are precious and honored in my sight,  
    and because I love you,  
I will give people in exchange for you,  
    nations in exchange for your life.  
5Do not be afraid, for I am with you;  
    I will bring your children from the east  
    and gather you from the west.  
6I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’  
    and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’  
Bring my sons from afar  
    and my daughters from the ends of the earth—  
7everyone who is called by my name,  
    whom I created for my glory,  
    whom I formed and made.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Isaiah 43:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+43%3A1%E2%80%937&version=NIV#en-NIV-18509) That is, the upper Nile region

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. [Isaiah 43:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2043.2)

The movie The Free State of Jones tells the US Civil War story of Newton Knight and some Confederate deserters and slaves who aided the Union Army and then resisted slaveholders after the war. Many herald Knight as the hero, but two slaves first saved his life after his desertion. They carried him deep into a secluded swampland and tended a leg wound he suffered while fleeing Confederate forces. If they’d abandoned him, he would have died.

The people of Judah were wounded and desperate, facing enemies and feeling helpless. Israel had been overtaken by Assyria, and Isaiah prophesied that one day they (Judah) would also be overcome by an enemy—Babylonia. Judah needed a God who would help, who would rescue and not forsake them. Imagine, then, the surging hope when the people heard God’s assurance: “Do not be afraid, for I am with you” ([Isaiah 43:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2043.5)). Whatever calamity they faced or trouble they would endure, He would be with them. He would “pass through the waters” with them, leading them to safety (v. 2). He would “walk through the fire” with them, helping them through the scorching flames (v. 2).

Throughout Scripture, God promises to be with His people, to care for us, guide us, and never abandon us—whether in life or death. Even when you find yourself in difficult places, God is with you. He’ll help you pass through the waters.

By:  [Winn Collier](https://odb.org/author/wcollier/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What deep waters are you facing? How does God’s promise to pass through them with you strengthen your heart today?

God, the water is deep, and I don’t see how I’m going to make it through. Thank You for promising to be with me and to carry me through!

#### **Insight**

Against the backdrop of the present Assyrian invasion ([Isaiah 10:3–6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2010.3%E2%80%936)) and the future Babylonian destruction and exile (39:6–7), God assured the people of Judah saying, “Do not fear!” (43:1). God reminded them that they were His chosen people and had a special personal relationship with Him: “I have summoned you by name; you are mine” (v. 1). God also gave them many assurances of His love and protection: He revealed Himself as their Creator, Redeemer, Owner, and Protector (vv. 1–4) and declared, “For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (v. 3). God’s people didn’t need to fear the Assyrians or the Babylonians because they were greatly loved by God (v. 4). But it’d be foolish for them to depend on anything other than God for deliverance (31:1). Isaiah called them to repent and to “turn to the Lord . . . for he will freely pardon” (55:7).

# God Calling – 4/27/20

# Seeing Christ

I am beside you. Can you not feel My Presence?

Contact with Me is not gained by the senses. Spirit-consciousness replaces sight.

When man sees Me with his human sight it does not mean of necessity that his spiritual perception is greater. Nay, rather that for that soul I have to span the physical and the spiritual with a spiritual vision clear to human eyes.

Remember this to cheer My disciples who have never seen Me, and yet have had a clear spiritual consciousness of Me.

"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Exodus 33:14