# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/11/20

# This Experience Must Come



Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha…saw him no more. —[2 Kings 2:11-12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Kings+2%3A11-12)

It is not wrong for you to depend on your “Elijah” for as long as God gives him to you. But remember that the time will come when he must leave and will no longer be your guide and your leader, because God does not intend for him to stay. Even the thought of that causes you to say, “I cannot continue without my ‘Elijah.’ ” Yet God says you must continue.

**Alone at Your “Jordan”** ([2 Kings 2:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+2:14)). The Jordan River represents the type of separation where you have no fellowship with anyone else, and where no one else can take your responsibility from you. You now have to put to the test what you learned when you were with your “Elijah.” You have been to the Jordan over and over again with Elijah, but now you are facing it alone. There is no use in saying that you cannot go— the experience is here, and you must go. If you truly want to know whether or not God is the God your faith believes Him to be, then go through your “Jordan” alone.

**Alone at Your “Jericho”** ([2 Kings 2:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+2:15)). Jericho represents the place where you have seen your “Elijah” do great things. Yet when you come alone to your “Jericho,” you have a strong reluctance to take the initiative and trust in God, wanting, instead, for someone else to take it for you. But if you remain true to what you learned while with your “Elijah,” you will receive a sign, as Elisha did, that God is with you.

**Alone at Your “Bethel”** ([2 Kings 2:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+2:23)). At your “Bethel” you will find yourself at your wits’ end but at the beginning of God’s wisdom. When you come to your wits’ end and feel inclined to panic— don’t! Stand true to God and He will bring out His truth in a way that will make your life an expression of worship. Put into practice what you learned while with your “Elijah”— use his mantle and pray (see [2 Kings 2:13-14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+2:13-14)). Make a determination to trust in God, and do not even look for Elijah anymore.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We never enter into the Kingdom of God by having our head questions answered, but only by commitment.  
[The Highest Good—Thy Great Redemption](http://www.dhp.org/Products/Quotable-Oswald-Chambers--The__BW382.aspx?affid=RBCHAMB)

# CCEL – 8/11/20

**That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death.**—[HEB. 2:14.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.14)

Our Saviour Jesus Christ . . . hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.—He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD shall wipe away the tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.—When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.—Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

[II Tim. 1:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.1.html" \l "iiTim.1.10). -[Isa. 25:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.25.html" \l "Isa.25.8). -[I Cor. 15:54-57](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.54).[II Tim. 1:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.1.html" \l "iiTim.1.7). -[Psa. 23:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.23.html" \l "Ps.23.4).

“Oh that I were as in months past.” [Job 29:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.29.html" \l "Job.29.2)

Numbers of Christians can view the past with pleasure, but regard the present with dissatisfaction; they look back upon the days which they have passed in communing with the Lord as being the sweetest and the best they have ever known, but as to the present, it is clad in a sable garb of gloom and dreariness. Once they lived near to Jesus, but now they feel that they have wandered from him, and they say, “O that I were as in months past!” They complain that they have lost their evidences, or that they have not present peace of mind, or that they have no enjoyment in the means of grace, or that conscience is not so tender, or that they have not so much zeal for God’s glory. The causes of this mournful state of things are manifold. It may arise through a comparative neglect of prayer, for a neglected closet is the beginning of all spiritual decline. Or it may be the result of idolatry. The heart has been occupied with something else, more than with God; the affections have been set on the things of earth, instead of the things of heaven. A jealous God will not be content with a divided heart; he must be loved first and best. He will withdraw the sunshine of his presence from a cold, wandering heart. Or the cause may be found in self-confidence and self-righteousness. Pride is busy in the heart, and self is exalted instead of lying low at the foot of the cross. Christian, if you are not now as you “were in months past,” do not rest satisfied with wishing for a return of former happiness, but go at once to seek your Master, and tell him your sad state. Ask his grace and strength to help you to walk more closely with him; humble yourself before him, and he will lift you up, and give you yet again to enjoy the light of his countenance. Do not sit down to sigh and lament; while the beloved Physician lives there is hope, nay there is a certainty of recovery for the worst cases.

# Word Live – 8/11/20

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

# Scripture Union – 8/11/20

# <https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/>

# Today in the Word – 8/11/20

# Recognizing Needs

**Read:** [**Luke 19:1-9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+19%3a1-9)

### Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” 6So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

8But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

9Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

As a classroom teacher for sixteen years, I learned to recognize my students’ social, emotional, and academic needs. Teaching to change lives was as much about what happened outside of the lesson plan as the lesson plan itself. As I spent time purposefully recognizing my students’ interests and frustrations, our relationship grew, and learning increased. Most importantly, I had more opportunities to share the gospel and see lives changed for good.

Today salvation has come to this house. Luke 19:9

In Luke 19 we read the story of Zacchaeus. As a chief tax collector, Zacchaeus had his financial needs met. He lacked nothing. Or did he? Why did he diligently make his way through the crowd and climb a sycamore tree to see Jesus (v. 4)? An even more intriguing question, with so many people suffering from poverty and physical needs, why did Jesus choose to spend time in Zacchaeus’s home? Jesus saw past the exterior trappings of wealth, recognizing that Zacchaeus had a need only He could meet. Jesus’ purposeful interaction with Zacchaeus focused on meeting his emotional and spiritual needs. While society rejected Zacchaeus, Jesus met him as a friend by sharing a meal with him in his home (v. 7). Jesus set an example of love and acceptance as He said, “I must stay in your house today” (v. 5).

Zacchaeus’s salvation became Jesus’ mission because even a wealthy tax collector needed to experience God’s love. Christ’s public recognition of Zacchaeus and His decision to spend time in his home showed that salvation was offered to all who believe (John 1:12). Every day, we meet people whose needs are not always instantly recognizable. Not everyone climbs a tree to see us. Ask God to give you an open eye and listening ear. May He open the door for conversations that will plant seeds for the gospel.

**Apply the Word**

Consider the people you interact with today, whether in person or online. What might their needs be? How might God want to use you to speak truth to them and encourage them this day?

### Pray with Us

Coming to the Lord in prayer today, we ask Him to show us opportunities to share the gospel and to guide our conversations at home, in the church, and in the workplace.

## BY Mary Martin, Former Professor of Christian School Education

# Our Daily Bread – 8/11/20

# Named by God

 **Read:** [**Ruth 1:19–22**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ruth%201.19%E2%80%9322)

19So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, “Can this be Naomi?”

20“Don’t call me Naomi,[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth+1%3A19%E2%80%9322&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-7148a" \o "See footnote a)]” she told them. “Call me Mara,[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth+1%3A19%E2%80%9322&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-7148b" \o "See footnote b)] because the Almighty[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth+1%3A19%E2%80%9322&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7148c)] has made my life very bitter. 21I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth+1%3A19%E2%80%9322&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7149d)] me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”

22So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Ruth 1:20](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth+1%3A19%E2%80%9322&version=NIV#en-NIV-7148) Naomi means pleasant.
2. [Ruth 1:20](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth+1%3A19%E2%80%9322&version=NIV#en-NIV-7148) Mara means bitter.
3. [Ruth 1:20](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth+1%3A19%E2%80%9322&version=NIV#en-NIV-7148) Hebrew Shaddai; also in verse 21
4. [Ruth 1:21](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth+1%3A19%E2%80%9322&version=NIV#en-NIV-7149) Or has testified against

“Don’t call me Naomi,” she told them. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter.” [Ruth 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ruth%201.20)

Riptide. Batgirl. Jumpstart. These are a few names given to counselors at the summer camp our family attends every year. Created by their peers, the camp nicknames usually derive from an embarrassing incident, a funny habit, or a favorite hobby.

Nicknames aren’t limited to camp—we even find them used in the Bible. For example, Jesus dubs the apostles James and John the “sons of thunder” ([Mark 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%203.17)). It’s rare in Scripture for someone to give themselves a nickname, yet it happens when a woman named Naomi asks people to call her “Mara,” which means “bitterness” ([Ruth 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ruth%201.20)), because both her husband and two sons had died. She felt that God had made her life bitter (v. 21).

The new name Naomi gave herself didn’t stick, however, because those devastating losses were not the end of her story. In the midst of her sorrow, God had blessed her with a loving daughter-in-law, Ruth, who eventually remarried and had a son, creating a family for Naomi again.

Although we might sometimes be tempted to give ourselves bitter nicknames, like “failure” or “unloved,” based on difficulties we’ve experienced or mistakes we’ve made, those names are not the end of our stories. We can replace those labels with the name God has given each of us, “loved one” ([Romans 9:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%209.25)), and look for the ways He’s providing for us in even the most challenging of times.

By:  [Lisa M. Samra](https://odb.org/author/lisasamra/)

#### Reflect & Pray

Think of a nickname someone gave you. What did you like or not like about it? How does being called a beloved child of God change how you see yourself?

Heavenly Father, thank You that I’m not defined by the circumstances or experiences of my life. Thank You for calling me Your child.

#### Insight

The Bible tells of people who were renamed to reflect their changed circumstances. The childless Abram became Abraham, meaning “father of many,” because he now would have countless descendants ([Genesis 17:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%2017.5)). Simon was renamed Peter, meaning “Rock” after he proclaimed Jesus as God ([Matthew 16:17–18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2016.17%E2%80%9318)). Naomi’s parents had given her a beautiful name meaning “sweetness or pleasantness.” But now, Naomi asked to be called “Mara,” meaning “bitter,” to reflect her harsh and difficult life ([Ruth 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ruth%201.20)). As Naomi and Ruth enter Bethlehem, “the whole town was stirred because of them” (v. 19). Bethlehem was a small town ([Micah 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah%205.2)), and the townsfolk would’ve remembered Naomi even after being away for more than ten years ([Ruth 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ruth%201.4)). But their question, “Can this be Naomi?” (v. 19) suggests they barely recognized her. Perhaps her appearance had been considerably and conspicuously altered by suffering.

# God Calling – 8/11/20

# You Are Mine

Jesus, Thou art watching over us to bless and care for us.

Yes! Remember that always -- that out of darkness, I am leading you to light. Out of unrest to rest, out of disorder to order. Out of faults and failure to perfection.

So, trust Me wholly. Fear nothing. Hope ever. Look ever up to Me and I will be your sure aid.

I and My Father are one. So He who made the ordered, beautiful world out of chaos, and set the stars in their courses, and made each plant to know its season, can He not bring out of your little chaos peace and order?

And He and I are One, and you are Mine. Your affairs are Mine. It is My Divine Task to order My affairs -- therefore yours will be ordered by Me.

The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.  Proverbs 11:8

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/12/20

# The Theology of Resting in God



Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? — [Matthew 8:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+8%3A26)

When we are afraid, the least we can do is pray to God. But our Lord has a right to expect that those who name His name have an underlying confidence in Him. God expects His children to be so confident in Him that in any crisis they are the ones who are reliable. Yet our trust is only in God up to a certain point, then we turn back to the elementary panic-stricken prayers of those people who do not even know God. We come to our wits’ end, showing that we don’t have even the slightest amount of confidence in Him or in His sovereign control of the world. To us He seems to be asleep, and we can see nothing but giant, breaking waves on the sea ahead of us.

“…O you of little faith!” What a stinging pain must have shot through the disciples as they surely thought to themselves, “We missed the mark again!” And what a sharp pain will go through us when we suddenly realize that we could have produced complete and utter joy in the heart of Jesus by remaining absolutely confident in Him, in spite of what we were facing.

There are times when there is no storm or crisis in our lives, and we do all that is humanly possible. But it is when a crisis arises that we instantly reveal upon whom we rely. If we have been learning to worship God and to place our trust in Him, the crisis will reveal that we can go to the point of breaking, yet without breaking our confidence in Him.

We have been talking quite a lot about sanctification, but what will be the result in our lives? It will be expressed in our lives as a peaceful resting in God, which means a total oneness with Him. And this oneness will make us not only blameless in His sight, but also a profound joy to Him.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

God does not further our spiritual life in spite of our circumstances, but in and by our circumstances.  Not Knowing Whither, 900 L

# CCEL – 8/12/20

**The Lord will not cast off for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion.**—[LAM. 3:31,32.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Lam.3.html" \l "Lam.3.31)

Fear thou not, . . . saith the Lord: for I am with thee; I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure.—For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

[Jer. 46:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.46.html" \l "Jer.46.28). -[Isa. 54:7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.54.html" \l "Isa.54.7),[10,11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.54.html" \l "Isa.54.10).[Mic. 7:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mic.7.html" \l "Mic.7.9).

“The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.” [Psalm 97:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.97.html" \l "Ps.97.1)

Causes for disquietude there are none so long as this blessed sentence is true. On earth the Lord’s power as readily controls the rage of the wicked as the rage of the sea; his love as easily refreshes the poor with mercy as the earth with showers. Majesty gleams in flashes of fire amid the tempest’s horrors, and the glory of the Lord is seen in its grandeur in the fall of empires, and the crash of thrones. In all our conflicts and tribulations, we may behold the hand of the divine King.

“God is God; he sees and hears

All our troubles, all our tears.

Soul, forget not, 'mid thy pains,

God o'er all forever reigns.”

In hell, evil spirits own, with misery, his undoubted supremacy. When permitted to roam abroad, it is with a chain at their heel; the bit is in the mouth of behemoth, and the hook in the jaws of leviathan. Death’s darts are under the Lord’s lock, and the grave’s prisons have divine power as their warder. The terrible vengeance of the Judge of all the earth makes fiends cower down and tremble, even as dogs in the kennel fear the hunter’s whip.

“Fear not death, nor Satan’s thrusts,

God defends who in him trusts;

Soul, remember, in thy pains,

God o'er all forever reigns.”

In heaven none doubt the sovereignty of the King Eternal, but all fall on their faces to do him homage. Angels are his courtiers, the redeemed his favourites, and all delight to serve him day and night. May we soon reach the city of the great King!

“For this life’s long night of sadness

He will give us peace and gladness.

Soul, remember, in thy pains,

God o'er all forever reigns.”

# Word Live – 8/12/20

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

# Scripture Union – 8/12/20

# <https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/>

# Today in the Word – 8/12/20

# Enduring Understanding

**Read:** [**Luke 14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14)

### Jesus at a Pharisee’s House

14 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. 2There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. 3Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” 4But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

5Then he asked them, “If one of you has a child[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14#fen-NIV-25559a)] or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?” 6And they had nothing to say.

7When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8“When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. 11For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

12Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

### The Parable of the Great Banquet

15When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

16Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

18“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

19“Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

20“Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

21“The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

22“‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

23“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

### The Cost of Being a Disciple

25Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

28“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? 29For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, 30saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

31“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

34“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

“Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Luke 14:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14#en-NIV-25559) Some manuscripts donkey

Did you ever sit through a class (or a sermon) and realize that you didn’t pay attention? For whatever reason, you simply missed the point . . . or you chose to ignore it. Good teachers know that successful lessons will create what is called an “enduring understanding” in their students. The lesson will stay with them not only for the test but also for a lifetime. Luke 14 describes Jesus’ visit at the house of a prominent Pharisee. After Jesus healed a man with a noticeable ailment, the Pharisees showed no response (v. 4). They did not rejoice over the miraculous healing. They did not fall on their faces in worshipful reaction to this miracle.

All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Luke 14:11

What had happened? Were they asleep during the lesson? Were they jealous? Apathetic? Offended that He had healed on the Sabbath? Jesus then took advantage of a second opportunity to continue His lesson (vv. 7–11). Noticing that the guests had picked prominent spots at the table, He taught them a lesson intended to show them that one’s position before God depends upon God’s grace, not personal ambition. “For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (v. 11).

Through parable, Christ challenged the assumption of the Pharisees that their place in God’s kingdom was a certainty. Those who rejected Christ also refused God’s invitation. Others would be invited in their place. The enduring understanding for us is to turn our tendency for self-exultation into humble action. Jesus says, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear” (v. 35). Are you listening to His message?

**Apply the Word**

Jesus has made a place for you at His table. He offers salvation as a free gift. How will you respond to His invitation?

### Pray with Us

Let’s pray we will learn and always remember the lessons of humility from today’s Scripture. Thank the Lord for His vivid teaching through His parables that astonished listeners and changed hearts.

## BY Mary Martin, Former Professor of Christian School Education

# Our Daily Bread – 8/12/20

# Living on Purpose

 **Read:** [**Romans 12:9–21**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2012.9%E2%80%9321)

### Love in Action

9Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-28262a" \o "See footnote a)] Do not be conceited.

17Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-28265b" \o "See footnote b)] says the Lord. 20On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
    if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28266c)]

21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Romans 12:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321&version=NIV#en-NIV-28262) Or willing to do menial work
2. [Romans 12:19](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321&version=NIV#en-NIV-28265) Deut. 32:35
3. [Romans 12:20](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321&version=NIV#en-NIV-28266) Prov. 25:21,22

Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%2010.31)

“We’re going on vacation!” my wife enthusiastically told our three-year-old grandson Austin as we pulled out of the driveway on the first leg of our trip. Little Austin looked at her thoughtfully and responded, “I’m not going on vacation. I’m going on a mission!”

We’re not sure where our grandson picked up the concept of going “on a mission,” but his comment gave me something to ponder as we drove to the airport: As I leave on this vacation and take a break for a few days, am I keeping in mind that I’m still “on a mission” to live each moment with and for God? Am I remembering to serve Him in everything I do?

The apostle Paul encouraged the believers living in Rome, the capital city of the Roman Empire, to “never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord” ([Romans 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2012.11)). His point was that our life in Jesus is meant to be lived intentionally and with enthusiasm. Even the most mundane moments gain new meaning as we look expectantly to God and live for His purposes.

As we settled into our seats on the plane, I prayed, “Lord, I’m yours. Whatever you have for me to do on this trip, please help me not to miss it.”

Every day is a mission of eternal significance with Him!

By:  [James Banks](https://odb.org/author/jamesbanks/)

#### Reflect & Pray

Have you ever been on a mission? How can you make life all about God?

Please give me grace to live for You, Jesus, so that I may one day hear You say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” ([Matthew 25:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2025.23)).

#### Insight

[Romans 12:9–21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2012.9%E2%80%9321) is referred to as a hortatory section, meaning “to exhort” or to strongly encourage an action. This passage contains encouragement to act in specific ways and contains a variety of seemingly random instructions consisting of internal attitudes and external activities. Internal attitudes sometimes require external expression; however, external actions must have an external expression.

Internal attitudes include hating evil, being joyful in hope and patient in affliction, and not being proud. External actions express themselves in being devoted in love, honoring others, having spiritual fervor (serving), and being faithful in prayer, sharing, and hospitality. We’re exhorted to bless the persecutor, live at peace, and not take revenge on our enemies.

# God Calling – 8/12/20

# Rule The World

Remember no prayer goes unanswered. Remember that the moment a thing seems wrong to you, or a person's actions to be not what you think they should be, at that moment begins your obligation and responsibility to pray for those wrongs to be righted, or that person to be different.

Face your responsibilities. What is wrong in your country, its statesmen, its laws, its people? Think out quietly, and make these matters your prayer matters. You will see lives you never touch altered, laws made at your request, evils banished.

Yes! Live in a large sense. Live to serve and to save. You may never go beyond one room, and yet you may become one of the most powerful forces for good in your country, in the world.

You may never see the mighty work you do, but I see it, evil sees it. Oh! it is a glorious life, the life of one who saves. Fellow-workers together with me. See this more and more.

Love with me, sharers of My life.

I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee.  Daniel 2:23

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/13/20

# “Do Not Quench the Spirit”



Do not quench the Spirit. —[1 Thessalonians 5:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Thessalonians+5%3A19)

The voice of the Spirit of God is as gentle as a summer breeze— so gentle that unless you are living in complete fellowship and oneness with God, you will never hear it. The sense of warning and restraint that the Spirit gives comes to us in the most amazingly gentle ways. And if you are not sensitive enough to detect His voice, you will quench it, and your spiritual life will be impaired. This sense of restraint will always come as a “still small voice” ([1 Kings 19:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Kings+19:12)), so faint that no one except a saint of God will notice it.

Beware if in sharing your personal testimony you continually have to look back, saying, “Once, a number of years ago, I was saved.” If you have put your “hand to the plow” and are walking in the light, there is no “looking back”— the past is instilled into the present wonder of fellowship and oneness with God ([Luke 9:62](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9:62) ; also see [1 John 1:6-7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:6-7)). If you get out of the light, you become a sentimental Christian, and live only on your memories, and your testimony will have a hard metallic ring to it. Beware of trying to cover up your present refusal to “walk in the light” by recalling your past experiences when you did “walk in the light” ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)). When-ever the Spirit gives you that sense of restraint, call a halt and make things right, or else you will go on quenching and grieving Him without even knowing it.

Suppose God brings you to a crisis and you almost endure it, but not completely. He will engineer the crisis again, but this time some of the intensity will be lost. You will have less discernment and more humiliation at having disobeyed. If you continue to grieve His Spirit, there will come a time when that crisis cannot be repeated, because you have totally quenched Him. But if you will go on through the crisis, your life will become a hymn of praise to God. Never become attached to anything that continues to hurt God. For you to be free of it, God must be allowed to hurt whatever it may be.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We have no right to judge where we should be put, or to have preconceived notions as to what God is fitting us for. God engineers everything; wherever He puts us, our one great aim is to pour out a whole-hearted devotion to Him in that particular work. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” My Utmost for His Highest, April 23, 773 L

# CCEL – 8/13/20

**He hath prepared for them a city.**—[HEB. 11:16.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.11.html" \l "Heb.11.16)

If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.—An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.—Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.—Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.—Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the the Lord draweth nigh.—Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

[John 14:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.14.html" \l "John.14.3). -[I Pet. 1:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.4). -[Heb. 13:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.14).[Acts 1:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.1.html" \l "Acts.1.11). -[Jas. 5:7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.5.html" \l "Jas.5.7). -[Heb. 10:37](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.37).[I Thes. 4:17,18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.4.html" \l "iThess.4.17).

“The cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted.” [Psalm 104:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.104.html" \l "Ps.104.16)

Lebanon’s cedars are emblematic of the Christian, in that they owe their planting entirely to the Lord. This is quite true of every child of God. He is not man-planted, nor self-planted, but God-planted. The mysterious hand of the divine Spirit dropped the living seed into a heart which he had himself prepared for its reception. Every true heir of heaven owns the great Husbandman as his planter. Moreover, the cedars of Lebanon are not dependent upon man for their watering; they stand on the lofty rock, unmoistened by human irrigation; and yet our heavenly Father supplieth them. Thus it is with the Christian who has learned to live by faith. He is independent of man, even in temporal things; for his continued maintenance he looks to the Lord his God, and to him alone. The dew of heaven is his portion, and the God of heaven is his fountain. Again, the cedars of Lebanon are not protected by any mortal power. They owe nothing to man for their preservation from stormy wind and tempest. They are God’s trees, kept and preserved by him, and by him alone. It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation; he stands in the most exposed position; he has no shelter, no protection, except this, that the broad wings of the eternal God always cover the cedars which he himself has planted. Like cedars, believers are full of sap, having vitality enough to be ever green, even amid winter’s snows. Lastly, the flourishing and majestic condition of the cedar is to the praise of God only. The Lord, even the Lord alone hath been everything unto the cedars, and, therefore David very sweetly puts it in one of the psalms, “Praise ye the Lord, fruitful trees and all cedars.” In the believer there is nothing that can magnify man; he is planted, nourished, and protected by the Lord’s own hand, and to him let all the glory be ascribed.

# Word Live – 8/13/20

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

# Scripture Union – 8/13/20

# <https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/>

# Today in the Word – 8/13/20

# Empathy in Action

**Read:** [**Romans 12:9–21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3a9%e2%80%9321)

### Love in Action

9Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3a9%e2%80%9321" \l "fen-NIV-28262a" \o "See footnote a)] Do not be conceited.

17Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3a9%e2%80%9321" \l "fen-NIV-28265b" \o "See footnote b)] says the Lord. 20On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
    if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3a9%e2%80%9321#fen-NIV-28266c)]

21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Romans 12:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3a9%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-28262) Or willing to do menial work
2. [Romans 12:19](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3a9%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-28265) Deut. 32:35
3. [Romans 12:20](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3a9%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-28266) Prov. 25:21,22

During the Vietnam War, for the first time, people had the opportunity to visually “see” the realities of war. The nightly news showed footage of each day’s violence, and suddenly war became up close and personal. Horrified by what they saw, people wanted to take action. Fast forward fifty-five years, and we may seem almost complacent to the world’s tragedies. With technology’s steady stream of society’s most horrific images coming at us through our phones, computers, and television, our minds can easily become numb to the horrors around us.

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Romans 12:15

In Romans 12 the Apostle Paul warns believers that it is very easy to become “conformed” to the world and its thinking (v. 2). But Paul also describes the “transformation” characteristics of a mind intent on serving and knowing the will of God. We are able to renew our minds in serving Jesus Christ. Verse 15 specifically describes how a Christian can and should respond with empathy toward others: “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”

In other words, we are to let our actions and reactions genuinely support those around us, whatever state they may be in. To do so, though, we must be aware of their joys and trials. We must be willing to place ourselves in situations where we will have the opportunity to rejoice and weep with others. We are not called to complacency. In rejoicing and weeping, God calls us to choose relationship and action. Romans 12 could be titled the “Empathy Chapter” because it shows Christian love in action. Here Paul gives multiple and practical ways to demonstrate empathy.

**Apply the Word**

God will likely bring someone into your life who could use a little empathy. Read Romans 12 and prayerfully ask God to reveal who that might be and pray that you will, indeed, be ready to respond with love in action.

### Pray with Us

To whom can you reach out today, and for whom can you pray? Ask God to show you how you can use the lessons we’ve been learning this month in your day-to-day interactions.

## BY Mary Martin, Former Professor of Christian School Education

# Our Daily Bread – 8/13/20

# A Great Work

 **Read:** [**Nehemiah 6:1–4**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh%206.1%E2%80%934)

### Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

6 When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates— 2Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+6%3A1%E2%80%934&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12404a)] on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me; 3so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” 4Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Nehemiah 6:2](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+6%3A1%E2%80%934&version=NIV#en-NIV-12404) Or in Kephirim

“I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” [Nehemiah 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh%206.3)

The security guard found and removed a piece of tape that was keeping a door from clicking shut. Later, when he checked the door, he found it had been taped again. He called the police, who arrived and arrested five burglars.

Working at the Watergate building in Washington, DC, the headquarters of a major political party in the US, the young guard had just uncovered the biggest political scandal of his lifetime simply by taking his job seriously—and doing it well.

Nehemiah began rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem—a task he took very seriously. Toward the end of the project, neighboring rivals asked him to meet with them in a nearby village. Under the guise of a friendly invitation was an insidious trap ([Nehemiah 6:1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh%206.1%E2%80%932)). Yet Nehemiah’s response shows the depth of his conviction: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” (v. 3).

Although he certainly possessed some authority, Nehemiah may not have rated very high on the hero scale. He wasn’t a great warrior, not a poet or a prophet, not a king or a sage. He was a cupbearer-turned-contractor. Yet he believed he was doing something vital for God. May we take seriously what He’s given us to do and do it well in His power and provision.

By:  [Glenn Packiam](https://odb.org/author/glennpackiam/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What has God called you to do? Why is it important for you to take it seriously—seeing it as a great work?

Dear God, help me to believe that I’m doing a great work. I trust that You’ve called me to this in this season. Give me the focus to stay the course.

#### Insight

The Jewish exiles returned from Babylonian captivity in three different groups. Zerubbabel (ca. 538 bc) and Ezra (ca. 458 bc) led the first two returns. Nehemiah (ca. 444 bc) led the third return, with the sole purpose of repairing the broken walls of Jerusalem, providing much needed protection for the city ([Nehemiah 1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh%201%E2%80%932)). This repair project was met with strong and hostile opposition (chs. 4–5). As the project neared its completion, Nehemiah’s enemies tried to distract and delay him from his task by inviting him to go to Ono for “peace talks.” To get to Ono, an obscure little village near the border of Samaria, Nehemiah would have to take a long, twenty-five-mile, fruitless journey through some very deserted and dangerous terrain. Nehemiah knew that his enemies “were scheming to harm [him]” (6:1–4). Despite the opposition, obstacles, and discouragements, however, the wall project was completed in record time—fifty-two days (v. 15).

# God Calling – 8/13/20

# Perfection

O Jesus, help us, we beseech Thee.

Ever your Helper through dark to Light, through weakness to Power, through sin to Salvation, through danger to Security, through poverty to Plenty, through indifference to Love, through resentment to Perfect Forgiveness.

Never be satisfied with a comparison with those around you. Ever let My words ring out. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Stop short at nothing less.

Make it your practice, each of you, to review your character -- take it in relation to life, to your dear ones, your household, friends, acquaintances, your country, your work.

See where I, in the same relation or circumstances or situation, should act differently. Plan how best such and such a fault can be eradicated, or such and such sin, mistake, or omission, be avoided.

A weekly review at least you must have.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.  Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.  Hebrews 12:14,15

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/14/20

# The Discipline of the Lord



My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him. —[Hebrews 12:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Hebrews+12%3A5)

It is very easy to grieve the Spirit of God; we do it by despising the discipline of the Lord, or by becoming discouraged when He rebukes us. If our experience of being set apart from sin and being made holy through the process of sanctification is still very shallow, we tend to mistake the reality of God for something else. And when the Spirit of God gives us a sense of warning or restraint, we are apt to say mistakenly, “Oh, that must be from the devil.”

“Do not quench the Spirit” ([1 Thessalonians 5:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+5:19)), and do not despise Him when He says to you, in effect, “Don’t be blind on this point anymore— you are not as far along spiritually as you thought you were. Until now I have not been able to reveal this to you, but I’m revealing it to you right now.” When the Lord disciplines you like that, let Him have His way with you. Allow Him to put you into a right-standing relationship before God.

“…nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.” We begin to pout, become irritated with God, and then say, “Oh well, I can’t help it. I prayed and things didn’t turn out right anyway. So I’m simply going to give up on everything.” Just think what would happen if we acted like this in any other area of our lives!

Am I fully prepared to allow God to grip me by His power and do a work in me that is truly worthy of Himself? Sanctification is not my idea of what I want God to do for me— sanctification is God’s idea of what He wants to do for me. But He has to get me into the state of mind and spirit where I will allow Him to sanctify me completely, whatever the cost (see [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+5:23-24)).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

# Am I getting nobler, better, more helpful, more humble, as I get older? Am I exhibiting the life that men take knowledge of as having been with Jesus, or am I getting more self-assertive, more deliberately determined to have my own way? It is a great thing to tell yourself the truth. The Place of Help

# CCEL – 8/14/20

**The joy of the Lord is your strength.**—[NEH. 8:10.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Neh.8.html" \l "Neh.8.10)

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth with singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people and will have mercy upon his afflicted.—Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.—The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.—My soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.—We . . . joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.—I will joy in the God of my salvation.

[Isa. 49:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.49.html" \l "Isa.49.13). –[Isa.12:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.12.html" \l "Isa.12.2). -[Psa. 28:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.28.html" \l "Ps.28.7). -[Isa. 61:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.61.html#Isa.61.10).[Rom. 15:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.15.html" \l "Rom.15.17). -[Rom. 5:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.5.html" \l "Rom.5.11). -[Hab. 3:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Hab.3.html" \l "Hab.3.18).

“Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work.” [Psalm 92:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.92.html" \l "Ps.92.4)

Do you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them? Then what a joyful Christian you ought to be! How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, can it matter what happens to you now? Luther said, “Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven; if thou hast but forgiven me, smite as hard as thou wilt;” and in a similar spirit you may say, “Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, persecution, what thou wilt, thou hast forgiven me, and my soul is glad.” Christian, if thou art thus saved, whilst thou art glad, be grateful and loving. Cling to that cross which took thy sin away; serve thou him who served thee. “I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Let not your zeal evaporate in some little ebullition of song. Show your love in expressive tokens. Love the brethren of him who loved you. If there be a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt, help him for Jonathan’s sake. If there be a poor tried believer, weep with him, and bear his cross for the sake of him who wept for thee and carried thy sins. Since thou art thus forgiven freely for Christ’s sake, go and tell to others the joyful news of pardoning mercy. Be not contented with this unspeakable blessing for thyself alone, but publish abroad the story of the cross. Holy gladness and holy boldness will make you a good preacher, and all the world will be a pulpit for you to preach in. Cheerful holiness is the most forcible of sermons, but the Lord must give it you. Seek it this morning before you go into the world. When it is the Lord’s work in which we rejoice, we need not be afraid of being too glad.

# Word Live – 8/14/20

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

# Scripture Union – 8/14/20

# <https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/>

# Today in the Word – 8/14/20

# Teaching Through Stories

**Read:** [**Matthew 13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13)

### The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

10The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

11He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;  
    though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

14In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
    you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.  
15For this people’s heart has become calloused;  
    they hardly hear with their ears,  
    and they have closed their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
    hear with their ears,  
    understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.’[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13#fen-NIV-23555a)]

16But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

18“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

### The Parable of the Weeds

24Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

27“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

28“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

29“‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

### The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

31He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

33He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13#fen-NIV-23573b)] of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

34Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables,  
    I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13#fen-NIV-23575c)]

### The Parable of the Weeds Explained

36Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

37He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

40“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

### The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

44“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

45“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

### The Parable of the Net

47“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

52He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

### A Prophet Without Honor

53When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. 54Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. 55“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? 56Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” 57And they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.”

58And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Matthew 13:15](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13#en-NIV-23555) Isaiah 6:9,10 (see Septuagint)
2. [Matthew 13:33](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13#en-NIV-23573) Or about 27 kilograms
3. [Matthew 13:35](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13#en-NIV-23575) Psalm 78:2

One of my favorite childhood books was The Pokey Little Puppy by Janette Lowrey. I remember sitting next to my father as he read the sad tale of that little disobedient puppy aloud, over and over again at my request. I treasured my worn-out book and loved to hear him read it again, even though I knew how it ended. Storytelling has a powerful influence.

Whoever has ears, let them hear. Matthew 13:9

As the great Teacher, Jesus understood the power of story to teach truth, change lives, and build relationships. The written word was not prevalent for the common man in the first century, so Jesus, in His infinite wisdom and creativity, used the power of story and oral tradition to share His life-giving message through parables. Christ shares five different parables in Matthew 13, the first time He has taught the people in this way. That is why the disciples question Him about His methodology in verse 10. He answered them, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them” (v. 11).

These parables contained important truths about God and His kingdom, and Jesus explained that the meaning would only be clear to those whose hearts were open and willing to learn. He compares faith to a seed (vv. 18–23). Some seed takes root and grows (signifying understanding), while other seeds fail, choked out by trouble, persecution, or the deceitfulness of the world. Through parables, Christ shared heavenly concepts using earthly illustrations. Though deceptively simple in style, they communicated powerful truth. Their meaning was hidden to those unwilling or unable to understand. The people were “amazed” by Jesus’ teaching (v. 54). Whether to a crowd gathered along the seaside or the disciples gathered in a home, Jesus was a powerful storyteller and teacher.

**Apply the Word**

When did you last take time to share God’s work in your life to tell your story? What theme, or big idea, runs through your story? Don’t be afraid to share it. There’s an audience that needs to hear.

### Pray with Us

A story is a powerful teaching tool! Thank the Lord for His parables in today’s Scripture that amazed His audience and ask Him to use your story as you reach out to people.

## BY Mary Martin, Former Professor of Christian School Education

# Our Daily Bread – 8/14/20

# Hope Blossoms

 **Read:** [**Isaiah 35:1–4**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2035.1%E2%80%934)

### Joy of the Redeemed

35 The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
    the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.  
Like the crocus, 2it will burst into bloom;  
    it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
    the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;  
they will see the glory of the Lord,  
    the splendor of our God.

3Strengthen the feeble hands,  
    steady the knees that give way;  
4say to those with fearful hearts,  
    “Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
    he will come with vengeance;  
with divine retribution  
    he will come to save you.”

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. [Isaiah 35:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2035.1)

In the city of Philadelphia, when weedy vacant lots were cleaned up and brightened with beautiful flowers and trees, nearby residents also brightened in overall mental health. This proved especially true for those who struggled economically.

“There’s a growing body of evidence that green space can have an impact on mental health,” said Dr. Eugenia South, “and that’s particularly important for people living in poorer neighborhoods.” South, a faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine, is coauthor of a study on the subject.

The downtrodden people of Israel and Judah found fresh hope in the prophet Isaiah’s vision of their beautiful restoration by God. Amid all the doom and judgment Isaiah foretold, this bright promise took root: “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy” ([Isaiah 35:1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2035.1%E2%80%932)).

No matter our situation today, we too can rejoice in the beautiful ways our heavenly Father restores us with fresh hope, including through His creation. When we feel down, reflecting on His glory and splendor will bolster us. “Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way,” Isaiah encouraged (v. 3).

Can a few flowers rekindle our hope? A prophet said yes. So does our hope-giving God.

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

#### Reflect & Pray

When you feel hopeless, how do you usually respond? How could spending time outdoors in God’s creation transform your despair to renewed hope in God?

Dear God, thank You for the splendor of Your creation, pointing me to Your glory, and reviving my hope in You.

For encouragement, read Hope: Choosing Faith Instead of Fear at [discoveryseries.org/q0733.](https://discoveryseries.org/q0733.)

#### Insight

[Isaiah 34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2034) and [35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isaiah%2035) provide a summary of the judgment and blessing described in the first half of the book. Chapter 34 describes judgment against “all nations” (vv. 1–2), then focuses on Edom (v. 5), an enemy of Israel, which was representative of all nations. The two chapters are linked by the warning of God’s vengeance “to uphold Zion’s cause” (34:8) and to save Zion (35:4). The restoration of Israel, or Zion, is described as ultimately involving the renewal of the land and people. The desert and wilderness will blossom (v. 1), Israel will be healed (vv. 5–6), be safe (vv. 7, 9), and be filled with joy (v. 10).

# God Calling – 8/14/20

# My Richest Gift

Jesus, Thou didst come that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

Life, spiritual, mental, physical, abundant Life -- Joyous Life, Powerful Life. Yes! These I came to give you.

Think you not My Heart was sad that so few would accept that gracious gift!

Think! earth's richest, choicest gift held out -- free to all, and no man to care to stretch out a hand to take it.

Is that possible? My Gift, the richest Heaven has to offer, that precious Gift of Life, abundant Life -- man turns away from -- rejects -- will have none of.

Let it not be true of you. Hasten to take -- to use.

Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him ... shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.  John 4:13,14

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/15/20

# The Evidence of the New Birth



You must be born again. —[John 3:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+3%3A7)

The answer to Nicodemus’ question, “How can a man be born when he is old?” is: Only when he is willing to die to everything in his life, including his rights, his virtues, and his religion, and becomes willing to receive into himself a new life that he has never before experienced ([John 3:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3:4)). This new life exhibits itself in our conscious repentance and through our unconscious holiness.

“But as many as received Him…” ([John 1:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1:12)). Is my knowledge of Jesus the result of my own internal spiritual perception, or is it only what I have learned through listening to others? Is there something in my life that unites me with the Lord Jesus as my personal Savior? My spiritual history must have as its underlying foundation a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. To be born again means that I see Jesus.

“…unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ” ([John 3:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3:3)). Am I seeking only for the evidence of God’s kingdom, or am I actually recognizing His absolute sovereign control? The new birth gives me a new power of vision by which I begin to discern God’s control. His sovereignty was there all the time, but with God being true to His nature, I could not see it until I received His very nature myself.

“Whoever has been born of God does not sin…” ([1 John 3:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+3:9)). Am I seeking to stop sinning or have I actually stopped? To be born of God means that I have His supernatural power to stop sinning. The Bible never asks, “Should a Christian sin?” The Bible emphatically states that a Christian must not sin. The work of the new birth is being effective in us when we do not commit sin. It is not merely that we have the power not to sin, but that we have actually stopped sinning. Yet [1 John 3:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+3:9) does not mean that we cannot sin— it simply means that if we will obey the life of God in us, that we do not have to sin.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

There is no allowance whatever in the New Testament for the man who says he is saved by grace but who does not produce the graceful goods. Jesus Christ by His Redemption can make our actual life in keeping with our religious profession.  
[Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](http://www.dhp.org/Products/Studies-in-the-Sermon-on-the-Mount%e2%80%94Gods-Character-and-the-Believers-Conduct__0098.aspx?affid=RBCHAMB)

# CCEL – 8/15/20

**The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will.**—[HEB. 13:20,21.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.20)

Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.—Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.—Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.—Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.

[II Cor. 13:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.13.html" \l "iiCor.13.11).[Eph. 2:8,9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.8). -[Jas. 1:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.1.html#Jas.1.17).[Phi. 2:12,13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.12). -[Rom. 12:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.12.html" \l "Rom.12.2). -[Phi. 1:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html#Phil.1.11).[II Cor. 3:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.3.html" \l "iiCor.3.5).

“Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide.” [Genesis 24:63](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.24.html" \l "Gen.24.63)

Very admirable was his occupation. If those who spend so many hours in idle company, light reading, and useless pastimes, could learn wisdom, they would find more profitable society and more interesting engagements in meditation than in the vanities which now have such charms for them. We should all know more, live nearer to God, and grow in grace, if we were more alone. Meditation chews the cud and extracts the real nutriment from the mental food gathered elsewhere. When Jesus is the theme, meditation is sweet indeed. Isaac found Rebecca while engaged in private musings; many others have found their best beloved there.

Very admirable was the choice of place. In the field we have a study hung round with texts for thought. From the cedar to the hyssop, from the soaring eagle down to the chirping grasshopper, from the blue expanse of heaven to a drop of dew, all things are full of teaching, and when the eye is divinely opened, that teaching flashes upon the mind far more vividly than from written books. Our little rooms are neither so healthy, so suggestive, so agreeable, or so inspiring as the fields. Let us count nothing common or unclean, but feel that all created things point to their Maker, and the field will at once be hallowed.

Very admirable was the season. The season of sunset as it draws a veil over the day, befits that repose of the soul when earthborn cares yield to the joys of heavenly communion. The glory of the setting sun excites our wonder, and the solemnity of approaching night awakens our awe. If the business of this day will permit it, it will be well, dear reader, if you can spare an hour to walk in the field at eventide, but if not, the Lord is in the town too, and will meet with thee in thy chamber or in the crowded street. Let thy heart go forth to meet him.

# Word Live – 8/15/20

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

# Scripture Union – 8/15/20

# <https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/>

# Today in the Word – 8/15/20

# Important Questions

**Read:** [**Mark 4:1-20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+4%3a1-20)

### The Parable of the Sower

4 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water’s edge. 2He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3“Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.”

9Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

10When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12so that,

“‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,  
    and ever hearing but never understanding;  
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+4%3a1-20#fen-NIV-24336a)]”

13Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14The farmer sows the word. 15Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 4:12](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+4%3a1-20#en-NIV-24336) Isaiah 6:9,10

Change came slowly to our 55-year-old Christian school. As a new principal, I started to question the formal faculty dress code, especially when I saw one of our teachers, Miss Russell sliding feet first down the tall tunnel slide with her kindergartners, dressed in her required blouse, knee-length skirt, heels, and hose. I wrote to the school board laying out reasons why it was time for a change in the dress code, which was unanimously approved. When I asked a school board member why it was still in effect, he commented, “No one ever asked us to change it.” I am so glad I asked the question!

The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. Mark 4:11

In Mark 4, Jesus was teaching through parables. Parables have been defined as earthly stories that relay heavenly truths. The crowd gathered to learn from Jesus was so large that Jesus taught from a boat on the lake (v. 1). In the Parable of the Sower (vv. 4–20) Jesus vividly described those who heard the gospel and their various responses. Some would hear the truth and respond with life-giving change, while others would not respond at all. He used imagery the crowds would understand.

Notice that later, when they were alone, Jesus did not scold the disciples for asking follow-up questions (vv. 10–11). Instead, He gave further explanation; their questions prompted Him to clarify critical meaning. While Jesus wanted all people to hear the gospel, not everyone would be ready to listen and believe (vv. 14–18). He used additional parables to magnify His message: no matter the response, we have a responsibility to share the gospel. What if the disciples had not asked questions? What if they had walked away without understanding Jesus’ message?

**Apply the Word**

Are you ever afraid to ask questions? Jesus encouraged His followers to learn, to ask so they could understand. Never be afraid to admit your confusion to God. And bring your questions to trustworthy Bible teachers who can help you understand and, in doing so, deepen your faith.

### Pray with Us

Again, as we read some of Christ’s parables, we see the disciples asking their Teacher difficult questions. During your prayer time, have the courage to ask God difficult questions you’re facing.

## BY Mary Martin, Former Professor of Christian School Education

# Our Daily Bread – 8/15/20

# Running into Love

 **Read:** [**Jeremiah 31:1–9**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2031.1%E2%80%939)

31 “At that time,” declares the Lord, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people.”

2This is what the Lord says:

“The people who survive the sword  
    will find favor in the wilderness;  
    I will come to give rest to Israel.”

3The Lord appeared to us in the past,[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+31%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-19695a" \o "See footnote a)] saying:

“I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
    I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.  
4I will build you up again,  
    and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt.  
Again you will take up your timbrels  
    and go out to dance with the joyful.  
5Again you will plant vineyards  
    on the hills of Samaria;  
the farmers will plant them  
    and enjoy their fruit.  
6There will be a day when watchmen cry out  
    on the hills of Ephraim,  
‘Come, let us go up to Zion,  
    to the Lord our God.’”

7This is what the Lord says:

“Sing with joy for Jacob;  
    shout for the foremost of the nations.  
Make your praises heard, and say,  
    ‘Lord, save your people,  
    the remnant of Israel.’  
8See, I will bring them from the land of the north  
    and gather them from the ends of the earth.  
Among them will be the blind and the lame,  
    expectant mothers and women in labor;  
    a great throng will return.  
9They will come with weeping;  
    they will pray as I bring them back.  
I will lead them beside streams of water  
    on a level path where they will not stumble,  
because I am Israel’s father,  
    and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Jeremiah 31:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+31%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-19695) Or Lord has appeared to us from afar

I have loved you with an everlasting love. [Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2031.3)

Nora was tiny, but “Bridget”—the belligerent, six-foot-tall woman glowering down at her—didn’t intimidate her. Bridget couldn’t even say why she had stopped at the crisis pregnancy center; she’d already made up her mind to “get rid of this . . . kid.” So Nora gently asked questions, and Bridget rudely deflected them with profanity-laced tirades. Soon Bridget got up to leave, defiantly declaring her intent to end her pregnancy.

Slipping her small frame between Bridget and the door, Nora asked, “Before you go, may I give you a hug, and may I pray for you?” No one had ever hugged her before—not with healthy intentions, anyway. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the tears came.

Nora beautifully reflects the heart of our God who loved His people Israel “with an everlasting love” ([Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2031.3)). The people had stumbled into the hard consequences of their persistent violation of His guidelines. Yet God told them, “I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. I will build you up again” (vv. 3–4).

Bridget’s history is complex. (Many of us can relate.) Until she ran into real love that day, her belief had been that God and His followers would only condemn her. Nora showed her something different: the God who won’t ignore our sin because He loves us beyond imagination. He welcomes us with open arms. We don’t have to keep running.

By:  [Tim Gustafson](https://odb.org/author/timgustafson/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What’s your perception of God? How does it line up with the God you read about in today’s Scripture reading?

Father, I so often take Your incredible love for granted. Forgive me, and help me to reflect that love to someone today.

#### Insight

Jeremiah offers unusual comfort to survivors of the Babylonian invasion and exile (30:3, 10–11, 24; 31:1). Without offering an immediate promise of rescue, the prophet reminds them of the God who expresses everlasting love and kindness “to us” by promising to help future generations as He did for their ancestors (31:3, 17). However, he offers no expectation of immediate circumstantial relief for those whose hearts remain cold. Instead he uses the remorse of Ephraim, the father of idolatrous northern tribes, to show how the ever-present God longs to show compassion and mercy to those who are resisting Him (vv. 18–22).

# God Calling – 8/15/20

# Not Punishment

I will guide your efforts. You are not being punished for past sins. Take My Words, revealed to you each day from the beginning, and do in all things as I say. I have been showing you the way. You have not obeyed Me in this.

I have a plan that can only in this way be revealed. So rarely do I find two souls in union who want only My Will, and only to serve Me. The union is miracle-working.

I have told you that I am longing to use you. Long ago My world would have been brought to Me, had I been served by many such two souls.

It was always "two and two."

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he  
removed our transgressions from us.  Psalm 103:12

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/16/20

# Does He Know Me…?



He calls his own…by name… —[John 10:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+10%3A3)

**When I have sadly misunderstood Him?** (see [John 20:11-18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:11-18)). It is possible to know all about doctrine and still not know Jesus. A person’s soul is in grave danger when the knowledge of doctrine surpasses Jesus, avoiding intimate touch with Him. Why was Mary weeping? Doctrine meant no more to her than the grass under her feet. In fact, any Pharisee could have made a fool of Mary doctrinally, but one thing they could never ridicule was the fact that Jesus had cast seven demons out of her (see [Luke 8:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+8:2)); yet His blessings were nothing to her in comparison with knowing Jesus Himself. “…she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus….Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ ” ([John 20:14, 16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:14,+16)). Once He called Mary by her name, she immediately knew that she had a personal history with the One who spoke. “She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ ” ([John 20:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:16)).

**When I have stubbornly doubted?** (see [John 20:24-29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:24-29)). Have I been doubting something about Jesus— maybe an experience to which others testify, but which I have not yet experienced? The other disciples said to Thomas, “We have seen the Lord” ([John 20:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:25)). But Thomas doubted, saying, “Unless I see…I will not believe” ([John 20:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:25)). Thomas needed the personal touch of Jesus. When His touches will come we never know, but when they do come they are indescribably precious. “Thomas…said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ” ([John 20:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:28)).

**When I have selfishly denied Him?** (see [John 21:15-17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+21:15-17)). Peter denied Jesus Christ with oaths and curses (see [Matthew 26:69-75](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26:69-75)), and yet after His resurrection Jesus appeared to Peter alone. Jesus restored Peter in private, and then He restored him publicly before the others. And Peter said to Him, “Lord…You know that I love You” ([John 21:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+21:17)).

Do I have a personal history with Jesus Christ? The one true sign of discipleship is intimate oneness with Him— a knowledge of Jesus that nothing can shake.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The life of Abraham is an illustration of two things: of unreserved surrender to God, and of God’s complete possession of a child of His for His own highest end. Not Knowing Whither, 901 R

# CCEL – 8/16/20

**The house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical.**—[I CHR. 22:5.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iChr.22.html" \l "iChr.22.5)

Ye . . . as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.—Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.—Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.—What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.—Ye . . . are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

[I Pet. 2:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.2.html" \l "iPet.2.5). -[I Cor. 3:16,17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.3.html" \l "iCor.3.16). -[I Cor. 6:19,20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.6.html" \l "iCor.6.19). -[II Cor. 6:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.6.html" \l "iiCor.6.16). -[Eph. 2:19-22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.19).

“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.” [Psalm 29:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.29.html" \l "Ps.29.2)

God’s glory is the result of his nature and acts. He is glorious in his character, for there is such a store of everything that is holy, and good, and lovely in God, that he must be glorious. The actions which flow from his character are also glorious; but while he intends that they should manifest to his creatures his goodness, and mercy, and justice, he is equally concerned that the glory associated with them should be given only to himself. Nor is there aught in ourselves in which we may glory; for who maketh us to differ from another? And what have we that we did not receive from the God of all grace? Then how careful ought we to be to walk humbly before the Lord! The moment we glorify ourselves, since there is room for one glory only in the universe, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. Shall the insect of an hour glorify itself against the sun which warmed it into life? Shall the potsherd exalt itself above the man who fashioned it upon the wheel? Shall the dust of the desert strive with the whirlwind? Or the drops of the ocean struggle with the tempest? Give unto the Lord, all ye righteous, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto him the honour that is due unto his name. Yet it is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence—“Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory.” It is a lesson which God is ever teaching us, and teaching us sometimes by most painful discipline. Let a Christian begin to boast, “I can do all things,” without adding “through Christ which strengtheneth me,” and before long he will have to groan, “I can do nothing,” and bemoan himself in the dust. When we do anything for the Lord, and he is pleased to accept of our doings, let us lay our crown at his feet, and exclaim, “Not I, but the grace of God which was with me!”

# Word Live – 8/16/20

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

# Scripture Union – 8/16/20

# <https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/>

# Today in the Word – 8/16/20

# Asking the Right Questions

**Read:** [**Matthew 16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16)

### The Demand for a Sign

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

2He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ 3and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16" \l "fen-NIV-23676a" \o "See footnote a)] 4A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

### The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

5When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. 6“Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

7They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

8Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? 9Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 10Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 11How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” 12Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

### Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

13When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

14They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

15“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

16Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18And I tell you that you are Peter,[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16" \l "fen-NIV-23691b" \o "See footnote b)] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#fen-NIV-23691c)] will not overcome it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#fen-NIV-23692d)] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be[[e](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#fen-NIV-23692e)] loosed in heaven.” 20Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

### Jesus Predicts His Death

21From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

23Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

24Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25For whoever wants to save their life[[f](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#fen-NIV-23698f)] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

28“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Matthew 16:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#en-NIV-23676) Some early manuscripts do not have When evening comes … of the times.
2. [Matthew 16:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#en-NIV-23691) The Greek word for Peter means rock.
3. [Matthew 16:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#en-NIV-23691) That is, the realm of the dead
4. [Matthew 16:19](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#en-NIV-23692) Or will have been
5. [Matthew 16:19](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#en-NIV-23692) Or will have been
6. [Matthew 16:25](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16#en-NIV-23698) The Greek word means either life or soul; also in verse 26.

Did you ever sit in class and become nervous when a teacher asked you a question you didn’t know how to answer? Teachers know there is an art and science to asking purposeful questions. Closed questions require a “yes” or “no” answer or a factual reply. Open questions require more content in the explanation. Asking closed questions is only the starting place for helping a student think more deeply.

You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Matthew 16:16

As we learn from the Great Teacher, we should understand the art of asking purposeful questions. Good questions help us get to know a person and can open the door to faith conversations. God set an example with the first question He asked Adam in Genesis 3:9: “Where are you?” God gave Adam a closed question. He knew exactly where Adam was...both his literal location in the Garden and his figurative location—where Adam was in relationship to Him. So why did God ask the question? To reveal truth. Often God asks questions to get people to examine their motives and actions.

In Matthew 16 Jesus asked His disciples a closed question, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” He then immediately followed this question by asking Peter an open question, “But what about you? . . . Who do you say I am?” Christ’s question was aimed at Peter’s heart by asking for his personal declaration of faith. Peter gives not just one answer but two (v. 16), clarifying his answer to Jesus with more explanation. Jesus’ question to His disciples was intended to engage them in a spiritual conversation, to help them understand His identity. Because we desire to serve others, we must be prayerfully willing to ask loving but sometimes tough questions.

**Apply the Word**

As you read Matthew 16, ask yourself, what is God’s intention with each question? Consider the conversations you might have today. How might God use you as His servant leader to ask important and needed questions that will lead others to know and follow Jesus Christ?

### Pray with Us

Imagine yourself in Peter’s sandals, facing Jesus’ question in today’s reading: “Who do you say I am?” As you pray, tell the Lord who He is in your life and thank Him for your salvation.

## BY Mary Martin, Former Professor of Christian School Education

# Our Daily Bread – 8/16/20

# Big Enough

 **Read:** [**Luke 18:15–17**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2018.15%E2%80%9317)

### The Little Children and Jesus

15People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. [Luke 18:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2018.16)

My grandson ran to the roller coaster line and stood with his back against the height-requirement sign to see if he was big enough to ride. He squealed with joy when his head exceeded the mark.

So much of life is about being “big” enough, isn’t it? To move from car seat to seatbelt and from the back seat to the front. To take a driver’s test. To vote. To get married. Like my grandson, we can spend our lives longing to grow up.

In New Testament times, children were loved but not highly valued in society until they “became of age” and could contribute to the home and enter the synagogue with adult privileges. Jesus shattered the standards of His day by welcoming the impoverished, the diseased, and even children. Three gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) tell of parents bringing little children to Jesus so that He might lay hands on them and pray for them ([Matthew 19:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2019.13); [Mark 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2010.16)).

The disciples rebuked the adults for what they saw as an inconvenience. At this, Jesus was “indignant” ([Mark 10:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2010.14)) and opened His arms to the little ones. He elevated their value in His kingdom and challenged all to become like children themselves—to embrace their vulnerability and need for Him in order to know Him ([Luke 18:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2018.17)). It’s our childlike need that makes us “big” enough to receive His love.

By:  [Elisa Morgan](https://odb.org/author/elisamorgan/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How might you need to remain small in order to know God? What does His love, the love of a heavenly Father, mean to you?

Dear God, help me embrace my need for You today that You might draw me closer, like a child, to Your heart.

To learn more about Jesus and His life, visit [christianuniversity.org/courses/life-of-christ/.](https://christianuniversity.org/courses/life-of-christ/)

#### Insight

Today’s passage is yet another instance when Jesus turns the perceptions and ideas of His disciples upside down. The disciples regarded the children as unimportant and not worthy of their master’s attention. Jesus corrected them with the exact opposite truth—these children exemplify what the kingdom is about. He tells His disciples not only that they’re important, but that the disciples must become like them in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. This isn’t the only time Jesus used a child to correct His disciples. In [Matthew 18:1–5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2018.1%E2%80%935) He says they must become like a child to be a part of God’s kingdom.

# God Calling – 8/16/20

# No Tired Work

Rest. It is wrong to force work. Rest until Life, Eternal Life, flowing through your veins and hearts and minds, bids you bestir yourselves, and work, glad work, will follow.

Tired work never tells.

Rest. Remember I am your Physician, Healer of mind and body.

Look to Me for cure, for rest, for Peace.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, ... healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.  Matthew 4:23

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/17/20

# Are You Discouraged or Devoted?



…Jesus…said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have…and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. —[Luke 18:22-23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+18%3A22-23)

Have you ever heard the Master say something very difficult to you? If you haven’t, I question whether you have ever heard Him say anything at all. Jesus says a tremendous amount to us that we listen to, but do not actually hear. And once we do hear Him, His words are harsh and unyielding.

Jesus did not show the least concern that this rich young ruler should do what He told him, nor did Jesus make any attempt to keep this man with Him. He simply said to him, “Sell all that you have…and come, follow Me.” Our Lord never pleaded with him; He never tried to lure him— He simply spoke the strictest words that human ears have ever heard, and then left him alone.

Have I ever heard Jesus say something difficult and unyielding to me? Has He said something personally to me to which I have deliberately listened— not something I can explain for the sake of others, but something I have heard Him say directly to me? This man understood what Jesus said. He heard it clearly, realizing the full impact of its meaning, and it broke his heart. He did not go away as a defiant person, but as one who was sorrowful and discouraged. He had come to Jesus on fire with zeal and determination, but the words of Jesus simply froze him. Instead of producing enthusiastic devotion to Jesus, they produced heartbreaking discouragement. And Jesus did not go after him, but let him go. Our Lord knows perfectly well that once His word is truly heard, it will bear fruit sooner or later. What is so terrible is that some of us prevent His words from bearing fruit in our present life. I wonder what we will say when we finally make up our minds to be devoted to Him on that particular point? One thing is certain— He will never throw our past failures back in our faces.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

# Much of the misery in our Christian life comes not because the devil tackles us, but because we have never understood the simple laws of our make-up. We have to treat the body as the servant of Jesus Christ: when the body says “Sit,” and He says “Go,” go! When the body says “Eat,” and He says “Fast,” fast! When the body says “Yawn,” and He says “Pray,” pray!

# Biblical Ethics, 107 R

# CCEL – 8/17/20

**Pray one for another, that ye may be healed.**—[JAS. 5:16.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.5.html" \l "Jas.5.16)

Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.—Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.—Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

[Gen. 18:27,28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.18.html" \l "Gen.18.27).[Luke 23:34](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.23.html" \l "Luke.23.34). -[Matt. 5:44](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.5.html" \l "Matt.5.44).[John 17:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.9),[20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.20). -[Gal. 6:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.6.html" \l "Gal.6.2).[Jas. 5:16,17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.5.html" \l "Jas.5.16).

“The mercy of God.” [Psalm 52:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.52.html" \l "Ps.52.8)

Meditate a little on this mercy of the Lord. It is tender mercy. With gentle, loving touch, he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He is as gracious in the manner of his mercy as in the matter of it. It is great mercy. There is nothing little in God; his mercy is like himself—it is infinite. You cannot measure it. His mercy is so great that it forgives great sins to great sinners, after great lengths of time, and then gives great favours and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God. It is undeserved mercy, as indeed all true mercy must be, for deserved mercy is only a misnomer for justice. There was no right on the sinner’s part to the kind consideration of the Most High; had the rebel been doomed at once to eternal fire he would have richly merited the doom, and if delivered from wrath, sovereign love alone has found a cause, for there was none in the sinner himself. It is rich mercy. Some things are great, but have little efficacy in them, but this mercy is a cordial to your drooping spirits; a golden ointment to your bleeding wounds; a heavenly bandage to your broken bones; a royal chariot for your weary feet; a bosom of love for your trembling heart. It is manifold mercy. As Bunyan says, “All the flowers in God’s garden are double.” There is no single mercy. You may think you have but one mercy, but you shall find it to be a whole cluster of mercies. It is abounding mercy. Millions have received it, yet far from its being exhausted; it is as fresh, as full, and as free as ever. It is unfailing mercy. It will never leave thee. If mercy be thy friend, mercy will be with thee in temptation to keep thee from yielding; with thee in trouble to prevent thee from sinking; with thee living to be the light and life of thy countenance; and with thee dying to be the joy of thy soul when earthly comfort is ebbing fast.

# Word Live – 8/17/20

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

# Scripture Union – 8/17/20

# <https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/>

# Today in the Word – 8/17/20

# Provide Feedback

**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://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+17%3a14%e2%80%9321#fen-NIV-23722a)]

#### Footnotes:

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

When you were in school, did you ever get a paper back from a teacher covered with red marks? Maybe you took one look at it and threw it in the garbage or stuffed it into the abyss of your desk. As an educator, I have seen some teachers spend hours over-grading papers. They give too much feedback all at once, and it’s usually wasted because the student never reads it. There is, indeed, an art to giving feedback.

Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed . . . Nothing will be impossible for you. Matthew 17:20-21

Jesus knew how to provide the right amount of feedback at just the right time. In our Scripture reading today, we see an example of how and when Jesus critiqued His disciples. A large crowd had been waiting for Jesus near the foot of the mountain where He had gone with Peter, James, and John and where the disciples witnessed the Transfiguration. In the meantime, a man with a demon-possessed child begged the disciples to cast out the demon. Even though they tried to help the child by performing this miracle, their efforts failed.

When Jesus learned about the incident, He used harsh words: “You unbelieving and perverse generation. How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” Jesus sounds like a frustrated teacher with students who just aren’t paying attention. His much-needed feedback used very direct language. He was honest with His followers about their lack of faith.

Notice what happens in verses 19–20. The disciples respond to the feedback with a question, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” This was encouraging! Here they showed that they wanted to learn. Hooray! Jesus seems to change His tone in verses 20 and 21 as He responds, “If you have faith . . . nothing will be impossible for you.”

**Apply the Word**

What about you? Are you open to receiving feedback from God’s Word and from God’s people? Pray that you will be open to receiving biblical feedback that will help you grow in faith.

### Pray with Us

Our prayer today is that we’ll have the humility to receive correction and even rebuke from God’s Word. Ask Him to open your heart to change and to help you grow in faith.

## BY Mary Martin, Former Professor of Christian School Education

# Our Daily Bread – 8/17/20

# Refined in the Fire

 **Read:** [**1 Peter 1:6–9**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%201.6%E2%80%939)

6In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.These trials will show that your faith is genuine. [1 Peter 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%201.7) nlt

Twenty-four–karat gold is nearly 100 percent gold with few impurities. But that percentage is difficult to achieve. Refiners most commonly use one of two methods for the purification process. The Miller process is the quickest and least expensive, but the resulting gold is only about 99.95 percent pure. The Wohlwill process takes a little more time and costs more, but the gold produced is 99.99 percent pure.

In Bible times, refiners used fire as a gold purifier. Fire caused impurities to rise to the surface for easier removal. In his first letter to believers in Jesus throughout Asia Minor (northern Turkey), the apostle Peter used the gold-refining process as a metaphor for the way trials work in the life of a believer. At that time, many believers were being persecuted by the Romans for their faith in Christ. Peter knew what that was like firsthand. But persecution, Peter explained, brings out the “genuineness of [our] faith” ([1 Peter 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%201.7)).

Perhaps you feel like you’re in a refiner’s fire—feeling the heat of setbacks, illness, or other challenges. But hardship is often the process by which God purifies the gold of our faith. In our pain we might beg God to quickly end the process, but He knows what’s best for us, even when life hurts. Keep connected to the Savior, seeking His comfort and peace.

By:  [Linda Washington](https://odb.org/author/lindawashingtonodb/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What challenges have you faced that led to your growth? How did you respond to them?

Father God, help me see how the trials of my life bring out the gold in me.

#### Insight

In [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%201.8), Peter is reinforcing an important idea that goes back to the gospel of John. In [John 20:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2020.29), the risen Christ said to Thomas, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” That includes all in our generation who have followed Jesus. While we weren’t present when He was physically on this earth, we can embrace by faith the record of Scripture ([1 Corinthians 15:3–4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%2015.3%E2%80%934)) and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives ([Romans 8:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%208.16)) as evidence of the truth of what we’ve not seen but believed ([John 16:13–15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2016.13%E2%80%9315)). As Paul wrote, “For we live by faith, not by sight” ([2 Corinthians 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%205.7)).

# God Calling – 8/17/20

# Nature Laughs

I come, I come. You need Me. Live much out here. My sunshine, My glorious air, My Presence, My teaching.

Would they not make holiday anywhere for you. Sunshine helps to make glad the heart of man. It is the laughter of Nature.

Live much outside. My medicines are sun and air, trust and faith. Trust is the spirit sun, your being enwrapped by the Divine Spirit.

Faith is the soul's breathing in of the Divine Spirit.  Mind, soul, and body need helping. Welcome My treatment for you both. Drawing near to Me.

Nature is often My nurse for tired souls and weary bodies. Let her have her way with you both.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.  Isaiah 55:12