# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/31/19

# Yesterday



You shall not go out with haste,…for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard. —[Isaiah 52:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Isaiah+52%3A12)

**Security from Yesterday.** “…God requires an account of what is past” ([Ecclesiastes 3:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes+3:15)). At the end of the year we turn with eagerness to all that God has for the future, and yet anxiety is apt to arise when we remember our yesterdays. Our present enjoyment of God’s grace tends to be lessened by the memory of yesterday’s sins and blunders. But God is the God of our yesterdays, and He allows the memory of them to turn the past into a ministry of spiritual growth for our future. God reminds us of the past to protect us from a very shallow security in the present.

**Security for Tomorrow.** “…the Lord will go before you….” This is a gracious revelation— that God will send His forces out where we have failed to do so. He will keep watch so that we will not be tripped up again by the same failures, as would undoubtedly happen if He were not our “rear guard.” And God’s hand reaches back to the past, settling all the claims against our conscience.

**Security for Today.** “You shall not go out with haste….” As we go forth into the coming year, let it not be in the haste of impetuous, forgetful delight, nor with the quickness of impulsive thoughtlessness. But let us go out with the patient power of knowing that the God of Israel will go before us. Our yesterdays hold broken and irreversible things for us. It is true that we have lost opportunities that will never return, but God can transform this destructive anxiety into a constructive thoughtfulness for the future. Let the past rest, but let it rest in the sweet embrace of Christ.

Leave the broken, irreversible past in His hands, and step out into the invincible future with Him.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Jesus Christ is always unyielding to my claim to my right to myself. The one essential element in all our Lord’s teaching about discipleship is abandon, no calculation, no trace of self-interest.  
Disciples Indeed

# CCEL – 12/31/19

**The Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.**—[DEUT. 1:31.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.1.html" \l "Deut.1.31)

I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.—In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.—As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him.

Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.—This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.—Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

[Exo. 19:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.19.html" \l "Exod.19.4). -[Isa. 63:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.63.html" \l "Isa.63.9). -[Deut. 32:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.32.html" \l "Deut.32.11).[Isa. 46:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.46.html" \l "Isa.46.4). -[Psa. 48:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.48.html" \l "Ps.48.14).[Psa. 55:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.55.html" \l "Ps.55.22). -[Matt. 6:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.6.html" \l "Matt.6.25),[32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.6.html" \l "Matt.6.32).[I Sam. 7:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iSam.7.html#iSam.7.12).

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” [John 7:37](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.7.html" \l "John.7.37)

Patience had her perfect work in the Lord Jesus, and until the last day of the feast he pleaded with the Jews, even as on this last day of the year he pleads with us, and waits to be gracious to us. Admirable indeed is the longsuffering of the Saviour in bearing with some of us year after year, notwithstanding our provocations, rebellions, and resistance of his Holy Spirit. Wonder of wonders that we are still in the land of mercy!

Pity expressed herself most plainly, for Jesus cried, which implies not only the loudness of his voice, but the tenderness of his tones. He entreats us to be reconciled. “We pray you,” says the Apostle, “as though God did beseech you by us.” What earnest, pathetic terms are these! How deep must be the love which makes the Lord weep over sinners, and like a mother woo his children to his bosom! Surely at the call of such a cry our willing hearts will come.

Provision is made most plenteously; all is provided that man can need to quench his soul’s thirst. To his conscience the atonement brings peace; to his understanding the gospel brings the richest instruction; to his heart the person of Jesus is the noblest object of affection; to the whole man the truth as it is in Jesus supplies the purest nutriment. Thirst is terrible, but Jesus can remove it. Though the soul were utterly famished, Jesus could restore it.

Proclamation is made most freely, that every thirsty one is welcome. No other distinction is made but that of thirst. Whether it be the thirst of avarice, ambition, pleasure, knowledge, or rest, he who suffers from it is invited. The thirst may be bad in itself, and be no sign of grace, but rather a mark of inordinate sin longing to be gratified with deeper draughts of lust; but it is not goodness in the creature which brings him the invitation, the Lord Jesus sends it freely, and without respect of persons.

Personality is declared most fully. The sinner must come to Jesus, not to works, ordinances, or doctrines, but to a personal Redeemer, who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. The bleeding, dying, rising Saviour, is the only star of hope to a sinner. Oh for grace to come now and drink, ere the sun sets upon the year’s last day!

No waiting or preparation is so much as hinted at. Drinking represents a reception for which no fitness is required. A fool, a thief, a harlot can drink; and so sinfulness of character is no bar to the invitation to believe in Jesus. We want no golden cup, no bejewelled chalice, in which to convey the water to the thirsty; the mouth of poverty is welcome to stoop down and quaff the flowing flood. Blistered, leprous, filthy lips may touch the stream of divine love; they cannot pollute it, but shall themselves be purified. Jesus is the fount of hope. Dear reader, hear the dear Redeemer’s loving voice as he cries to each of us,

“IF ANY MAN THIRST, LET HIM COME UNTO ME AND DRINK.”

# Word Live – 12/31/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/31/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/31/19

# Every Knee Will Bow and Every Tongue Confess!

**Read:** [**Philippians 2:5–11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3a5%e2%80%9311)

5In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6Who, being in very nature[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3a5%e2%80%9311#fen-NIV-29398a)] God,  
    did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
7rather, he made himself nothing  
    by taking the very nature[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3a5%e2%80%9311#fen-NIV-29399b)] of a servant,  
    being made in human likeness.  
8And being found in appearance as a man,  
    he humbled himself  
    by becoming obedient to death—  
        even death on a cross!

9Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
    and gave him the name that is above every name,  
10that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
    in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
11and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
    to the glory of God the Father.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Philippians 2:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3a5%e2%80%9311#en-NIV-29398) Or in the form of
2. [Philippians 2:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3a5%e2%80%9311#en-NIV-29399) Or the form

“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” is one of the great hymns of the Christian faith. It says a lot that evangelist Billy Graham chose it as one of six songs to be sung at his funeral, and as only one of two hymns to be sung by the congregation on that occasion. As one verse proclaims: “Let every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball, to Him all majesty ascribe, and crown Him Lord of all!”

God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. Philippians 2:9

This month, we’ve answered the life-changing question, “Who is this Jesus?” One day, every person will answer with this confident statement: “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (v. 11). Today’s reading, most of which may be an early Christian hymn, walks us through the basic points of Christology.

The first three verses describe Jesus’ first Advent, namely, His Incarnation and the mission of redemption (vv. 6–8). Despite being God, He stepped down to become human, then down again to be a servant, then down again to dying a convict’s death. These deliberate steps of humility were also steps of obedience to His Father and of love for us. Jesus is the perfect example of valuing or esteeming others above ourselves (v. 3). In this and other ways, we’re to “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (v. 5).

The second three verses describe Jesus’ second Advent, in other words His Second Coming and (again) mission of redemption (vv. 9–11). The previous steps lead down and now they step up: God the Father “exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.” Jesus will take His place as King and rule over all. Throughout the material and spiritual realms, every knee will bow and every tongue confess these truths!

### **Apply the Word**

“Who is this Jesus?” Are you ready with the answer? He’s the One we follow, the One we imitate, the One who is transforming us from the inside out. Take time to review and pray over this month’s study on Jesus, including the notes you began on December 1. Let’s rejoice in these truths about Christ as we begin the new year!

### **Pray with Us**

On this last day of the year, we want to thank you for your financial support of Today in the Word in 2019. We thank God for a year full of His grace, love, and mercy to us. We hope that you will join us as we begin 2020. Happy New Year!

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/31/19

# Beautiful Fruit

 **Read: Luke 8:4–8**

4While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: 5“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. 6Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.”

When he said this, he called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

**Read: Luke 8:11–15**

11“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11

“Kids should be able to throw a seed anywhere they want [in the garden] and see what pops up,” suggests Rebecca Lemos-Otero, founder of City Blossoms. While this is not a model for careful gardening, it reflects the reality that each seed has the potential to burst forth with life. Since 2004, City Blossoms has created gardens for schools and neighborhoods in low-income areas. The kids are learning about nutrition and gaining job skills through gardening. Rebecca says, “Having a lively green space in an urban area . . . creates a way for kids to be outside doing something productive and beautiful.”

Jesus told a story about the scattering of seed that had the potential of producing “a hundred times more than was sown” (Luke 8:8). That seed was God’s good news planted on “good soil,” which He explained is “honest, good-hearted people who hear God’s word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest” (v. 15 nlt).

The only way we can be fruitful, Jesus said, is to stay connected to Him (John 15:4). As we’re taught by Christ and cling to Him, the Spirit produces in us His fruit of “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). He uses the fruit He produces in us to touch the lives of others, who are then changed and grow fruit from their own lives. This makes for a beautiful life.

By: [Anne Cetas](https://odb.org/author/annecetas/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How are you staying connected to Jesus? What fruit do you want Him to produce in you?

I want a beautiful life, Father. Please produce Your fruit in me that I might live a life that points others to You.

#### **Insight**

When Christ’s disciples asked Him to interpret the story of the sower (Luke 8:9–10), He first quoted from the prophet Isaiah to explain why He spoke to the crowds in parables (Isaiah 6:1–10). As in the days of Isaiah, Israel still wasn’t ready to recognize the kind of good news they needed. While looking for political relief and material prosperity, they couldn’t imagine a rescue and kingdom found in the mercy and love of a rejected Messiah—and in a harvest of peace, joy, and goodwill that would grow in and by His Spirit.

By: [**Mart DeHaan**](https://odb.org/author/martdehaan-2/)

# God Calling – 12/31/19

# Jesus the Conqueror

Jesus. That is the Name by which you conquer. Jesus. Not as cringing suppliants but as those recognizing a friend, say My Name -- Jesus. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

And in that word "sins" read not only vice and degradation, but doubts, fears, tempers, despondencies, impatience, lack of Love in big and little things. Jesus. "He shall save His people from their sins." The very uttering of the Name lifts the soul away from petty valley-irritations to mountain heights.

"He shall save His people from their sins." Savior and Friend, Joy-bringer and Rescuer, Leader and Guide -- Jesus. Do you need delivering from cowardice, from adverse circumstances, from poverty, from failure, from weakness?

"There is none other Name . . . whereby you can be saved" -- Jesus. Say it often. Claim the Power it brings.

"Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven." Psalm 148:13

# My Utmost for His Highest – 1/1/20

# Let Us Keep to the Point



"…my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." —[Philippians 1:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Philippians+1%3A20)

**My Utmost for His Highest.** “…my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed….” We will all feel very much ashamed if we do not yield to Jesus the areas of our lives He has asked us to yield to Him. It’s as if Paul were saying, “My determined purpose is to be my utmost for His highest— my best for His glory.” To reach that level of determination is a matter of the will, not of debate or of reasoning. It is absolute and irrevocable surrender of the will at that point. An undue amount of thought and consideration for ourselves is what keeps us from making that decision, although we cover it up with the pretense that it is others we are considering. When we think seriously about what it will cost others if we obey the call of Jesus, we tell God He doesn’t know what our obedience will mean. Keep to the point— He does know. Shut out every other thought and keep yourself before God in this one thing only— my utmost for His highest. I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for Him and Him alone.

**My Unstoppable Determination for His Holiness.** “Whether it means life or death-it makes no difference!” (see [Philippians 1:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+1:21)). Paul was determined that nothing would stop him from doing exactly what God wanted. But before we choose to follow God’s will, a crisis must develop in our lives. This happens because we tend to be unresponsive to God’s gentler nudges. He brings us to the place where He asks us to be our utmost for Him and we begin to debate. He then providentially produces a crisis where we have to decide— for or against. That moment becomes a great crossroads in our lives. If a crisis has come to you on any front, surrender your will to Jesus absolutely and irrevocably.

**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, 565 R

# CCEL – 1/1/20

**This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind,. . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**—[PHI. 3:13,14.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.3.html" \l "Phil.3.13)

Father, I will that they . . . whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.—I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.—He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.—Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.

[John 17:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.24). -[II Tim. 1:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.1.html" \l "iiTim.1.12). -[Phi. 1:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html" \l "Phil.1.6).[I Cor. 9:24,25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.9.html" \l "iCor.9.24). -[Heb. 12:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.12.html" \l "Heb.12.1).

“They did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.” [Joshua 5:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Josh.5.html" \l "Josh.5.12)

Israel’s weary wanderings were all over, and the promised rest was attained. No more moving tents, fiery serpents, fierce Amalekites, and howling wildernesses: they came to the land which flowed with milk and honey, and they ate the old corn of the land. Perhaps this year, beloved Christian reader, this may be thy case or mine. Joyful is the prospect, and if faith be in active exercise, it will yield unalloyed delight. To be with Jesus in the rest which remaineth for the people of God, is a cheering hope indeed, and to expect this glory so soon is a double bliss.

Unbelief shudders at the Jordan which still rolls between us and the goodly land, but let us rest assured that we have already experienced more ills than death at its worst can cause us. Let us banish every fearful thought, and rejoice with exceeding great joy, in the prospect that this year we shall begin to be “forever with the Lord.”

A part of the host will this year tarry on earth, to do service for their Lord. If this should fall to our lot, there is no reason why the New Year’s text should not still be true. “We who have believed do enter into rest.” The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance; he gives us “glory begun below.” In heaven they are secure, and so are we preserved in Christ Jesus; there they triumph over their enemies, and we have victories too. Celestial spirits enjoy communion with their Lord, and this is not denied to us; they rest in his love, and we have perfect peace in him: they hymn his praise, and it is our privilege to bless him too. We will this year gather celestial fruits on earthly ground, where faith and hope have made the desert like the garden of the Lord. Man did eat angels’ food of old, and why not now? O for grace to feed on Jesus, and so to eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan this year!

# Word Live – 1/1/20

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

# Scripture Union – 1/1/20

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

# Today in the Word – 1/1/20

# Following by Faith

**Read:** [**Hebrews 11:1–13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+11%3a1%e2%80%9313)

### **Faith in Action**

11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2This is what the ancients were commended for.

3By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

4By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

5By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+11%3a1%e2%80%9313#fen-NIV-30178a)] For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

7By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

8By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+11%3a1%e2%80%9313#fen-NIV-30184b)] considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

13All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Hebrews 11:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+11%3a1%e2%80%9313#en-NIV-30178) Gen. 5:24
2. [Hebrews 11:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+11%3a1%e2%80%9313#en-NIV-30184) Or By faith Abraham, even though he was too old to have children—and Sarah herself was not able to conceive—was enabled to become a father because he

Do you have a favorite Bible verse or Scripture passage? This month, we will read portions of Scripture that defined the lives of Christ followers. Some names, such as Billy Graham, Charles Spurgeon, or Dwight Lyman Moody, might be familiar to you. Others, like Haddon Robinson, Athanasius, or Mary McLeod Bethune, may be less familiar. What these people have in common is their high view of God’s Word. We ask that the Holy Spirit will work in our lives as we reflect on their faithful examples and open God’s Word together.

Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1

In chapter 11 of Hebrews, often called the Hall of Faith, we read about individuals who followed God faithfully. These Old Testament names are familiar to us: Abel (vv. 3–4), Enoch (vv. 5–6), Noah (v. 7), Abraham (vv. 8–10), and Sarah (v. 11). They are noted, not just for their courage, bravery, and commitment to the Lord but also for their faith. But what exactly do we mean when we say someone has faith?

The author of Hebrews provides a definition: “Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (v. 1). Two components make up this definition. First, the word for confidence could also be translated as assurance and derives its meaning from that which has a solid foundation. The word hope (v. 1) is not a flippant, positive attitude, but means to wait with confidence, knowing salvation is coming. The second part of the verse communicates the importance of conviction. Even when we cannot see God at work, we have faith that what He says is true (v. 3). The people in Hebrews 11 were commended for their unwavering faith, even till they died (v. 13). As we learn about fellow Christ followers this month, may we also be inspired to follow Him faithfully.

**>>** Make reading God’s Word a priority in the year ahead. It may help to pick a specific place and time each day to read. If you have time today, read Hebrews 11 and be inspired by the many who followed with faith.

## BY This Month's Author

# Our Daily Bread – 1/1/20

# Prompted to Pray



**Read: 1 Timothy 2:1–8**

### **Instructions on Worship**

2 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. 7And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

8Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

I constantly remember you in my prayers. 2 Timothy 1:3

“Several years ago I was prompted to pray for you often, and I wonder why.”

That text message from an old friend came with a photo of a note she’d kept in her Bible: “Pray for James. Cover mind, thoughts, words.” Beside my name she’d recorded three separate years.

I looked at the years and caught my breath. I wrote back and asked what month she began to pray. She responded, “Sometime around July.”

That was the month I was preparing to leave home for extended study abroad. I would be facing an unfamiliar culture and language and have my faith challenged like never before. As I looked at the note, I realized I’d received the precious gift of generous prayer.

My friend’s kindness reminded me of another “prompting” to pray, Paul’s instruction to his young missionary friend Timothy: “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people” (1 Timothy 2:1). The phrase “first of all” indicates highest priority. Our prayers matter, Paul explains, because God “wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” about Jesus (v. 4).

God moves through faithful prayer in countless ways to encourage others and draw them near to Himself. We may not know someone’s circumstances when they come to mind, but God does. And He’ll help that person as we pray!

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Who comes to mind that needs your prayers in this new year? How can you remind yourself to pray for them often?

Loving God, please help me to pray often and to make a lasting difference in others’ lives through my intercession for them.

To learn more about prayer, visit [https://bit.ly/2kTeSVt.](https://bit.ly/2kTeSVt)

#### **Insight**

One of the ways we pray for all people is by praying for authorities (1 Timothy 2:1–2). Such praying contributes to “all people” being able to “live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” under leaders who take their responsibilities seriously. Notice the two pairs of ideas Paul is presenting as the goal of these prayers. The first pair, “peaceful and quiet,” refers to a dual focus of calm. Vincent’s Word Studies tells us that “peaceful” speaks of a lack of outward disturbance and “quiet” refers to “tranquility arising from within.” The second pair of ideas, “godliness and holiness,” speak to how we live out our faith. “Godliness” refers to a life that flows out of a right belief in God, while “holiness” speaks of respectful behavior. To pray for “all those in authority” (v. 2) would have been difficult for Timothy, given the political upheaval and generally anti-Christian sentiment in the Roman Empire at that time.

By: [**Bill Crowder**](https://odb.org/author/billcrowder/)

# God Calling – 1/1/20

# Between the Years

Our Lord and our God. We joy in Thee. Without Thy Help we could not face unafraid the year before us.

I stand between the years. The Light of My Presence is flung across the year to come - the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness. Backward, over the past year, is My Shadow thrown, hiding trouble and sorry and disappointment.

Dwell not on the past - only on the present. Only use the past as the trees use My Sunlight to absorb it, to make from it in after days the warming fire-rays. So store only the blessings from Me, the Light of the World. Encourage yourselves by the thought of these.

Bury every fear of the future, of poverty for those dear to you, of suffering, of loss. Bury all thought of unkindness and bitterness, all your dislikes, your resentments, your sense of failure, your disappointment in others and in yourselves, your gloom, your despondency, and let us leave them all, buried, and go forward to a new and risen life.

Remember that you must not see as the world sees.  I hold the year in My Hands - in trust for you. But I shall guide you one day at a time.

Leave the rest with Me. You must not anticipate the gift by fears or thoughts of the days ahead.

And for each day I shall supply the wisdom and the strength.

I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.  John 8:12

# My Utmost for His Highest – 1/2/20

# Will You Go Out Without Knowing?



He went out, not knowing where he was going. —[Hebrews 11:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Hebrews+11%3A8)

Have you ever ‘gone out’ in this way? If so, there is no logical answer possible when anyone asks you what you are doing. One of the most difficult questions to answer in Christian work is, ‘What do you expect to do?’ You don’t know what you are going to do. The only thing you know is that God knows what He is doing. Continually examine your attitude toward God to see if you are willing to ‘go out’ in every area of your life, trusting in God entirely. It is this attitude that keeps you in constant wonder, because you don’t know what God is going to do next. Each morning as you wake, there is a new opportunity to ‘go out,’ building your confidence in God. ‘…do not worry about your life…nor about the body…’ ([Luke 12:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+12:22)). In other words, don’t worry about the things that concerned you before you did ‘go out.’

Have you been asking God what He is going to do? He will never tell you. God does not tell you what He is going to do— He reveals to you who He is. Do you believe in a miracle-working God, and will you ‘go out’ in complete surrender to Him until you are not surprised one iota by anything He does?

Believe God is always the God you know Him to be when you are nearest to Him. Then think how unnecessary and disrespectful worry is! Let the attitude of your life be a continual willingness to ‘go out’ in dependence upon God, and your life will have a sacred and inexpressible charm about it that is very satisfying to Jesus. You must learn to ‘go out’ through your convictions, creeds, or experiences until you come to the point in your faith where there is nothing between yourself and God.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

Am I learning how to use my Bible? The way to become complete for the Master’s service is to be well soaked in the Bible; some of us only exploit certain passages. Our Lord wants to give us continuous instruction out of His word; continuous instruction turns hearers into disciples.  Approved Unto God, 11 L

# CCEL – 1/2/20

**Sing unto the Lord a new song.**—[ISA. 42:10.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.42.html" \l "Isa.42.10)

Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.—He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.—The joy of the Lord is your strength.—Paul . . . thanked God, and took courage.

Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

[Psa. 81:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.81.html" \l "Ps.81.1). -[Psa. 40:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.40.html" \l "Ps.40.3).[Josh. 1:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Josh.1.html" \l "Josh.1.9). -[Neh. 8:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Neh.8.html" \l "Neh.8.10). -[Acts 28:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.28.html" \l "Acts.28.15).[Rom. 13:11-14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.13.html" \l "Rom.13.11).

‘Continue in prayer.’ [Colossians 4:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.4.html" \l "Col.4.2)

It is interesting to remark how large a portion of Sacred Writ is occupied with the subject of prayer, either in furnishing examples, enforcing precepts, or pronouncing promises. We scarcely open the Bible before we read, ‘Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;’ and just as we are about to close the volume, the ‘Amen’ of an earnest supplication meets our ear. Instances are plentiful. Here we find a wrestling Jacob—there a Daniel who prayed three times a day—and a David who with all his heart called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elias; in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of commands, and myriads of promises. What does this teach us, but the sacred importance and necessity of prayer? We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in his Word, he intended to be conspicuous in our lives. If he has said much about prayer, it is because he knows we have much need of it. So deep are our necessities, that until we are in heaven we must not cease to pray. Dost thou want nothing? Then, I fear thou dost not know thy poverty. Hast thou no mercy to ask of God? Then, may the Lord’s mercy show thee thy misery! A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honour of a Christian. If thou be a child of God, thou wilt seek thy Father’s face, and live in thy Father’s love. Pray that this year thou mayst be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; have closer communion with Christ, and enter oftener into the banqueting-house of his love. Pray that thou mayst be an example and a blessing unto others, and that thou mayst live more to the glory of thy Master. The motto for this year must be, ‘Continue in prayer.’

# Word Live – 1/2/20

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

# Scripture Union – 1/2/20

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

# Today in the Word – 1/2/20

# A Faithful Family

**Read:** [**2 Timothy 3:10–17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+3%3a10%e2%80%9317)

### **A Final Charge to Timothy**

10You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. 12In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the servant of God[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+3%3a10%e2%80%9317#fen-NIV-29871a)] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Timothy 3:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+3%3a10%e2%80%9317#en-NIV-29871) Or that you, a man of God,

Harry Ironside was pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago for eighteen years (1930–1948). His teaching and preaching influenced thousands for Christ. But his faith was first shaped by his father and mother who taught him about Jesus and prayed he would come to know the Lord. They encouraged him to see D. L. Moody preach in 1888 at a Los Angeles evangelistic campaign. After several more months of wrestling with his faith, Ironside “rested on the Word of God and confessed Christ as my Savior.” His parents’ prayers were answered, and the future pastor and evangelist was shaped by their prayers.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

Our text today contains Paul’s charge to young Timothy. The apostle encouraged Timothy to continue to believe in salvation through faith in Jesus. Timothy was also raised in a Christian household and learned his faith from his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). Paul says of the young man: “From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures” (3:15).

Paul warned that following Christ faithfully would not be easy. Timothy knew about the hardships Paul had faced (vv. 10–11), and he too would face persecution for being a Christian (vv. 12–13). Paul realized that any follower of Jesus would need encouragement to face an oppressive world. He encouraged Timothy to continue in what he learned as a child because of the people he learned it from (v. 14).

Paul inspired young Timothy to rely on God’s Word, which was instrumental in building his faith (v.15). Timothy’s family also played a crucial role in his life, sharing God’s Word with him and praying for him. The Scriptures have lasting power to shape our lives and equip us to be effective servants of God. As Paul says, they are inspired, God-breathed, so worthy of our time and attention (v. 16).

**>>** How can you teach the next generation about God and His Word? Ask God for opportunities to share your faith with the young people in your life.

## BY This Month's Author

# Our Daily Bread – 1/2/20

# Good for You

 **Read: Proverbs 24:13–14**

#### **Saying 26**

13Eat honey, my son, for it is good;  
    honey from the comb is sweet to your taste.  
14Know also that wisdom is like honey for you:  
    If you find it, there is a future hope for you,  
    and your hope will not be cut off.

Wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope. Proverbs 24:14

People the world over spent an estimated $98.2 billion on chocolate in 2016. The number is staggering, yet at the same time not all that surprising. Chocolate, after all, tastes delicious and we enjoy consuming it. So the world rejoiced collectively when the sweet treat was found to have significant health benefits as well. Chocolate contains flavonoids that help safeguard the body against aging and heart disease. Never has a prescription for health been so well received or heeded (in moderation, of course!).

Solomon suggested there’s another “sweet” worthy of our investment: wisdom. He recommended his son eat honey “for it is good” (Proverbs 24:13) and compared its sweetness to wisdom. The person who feeds on God’s wisdom in Scripture finds it not only sweet to the soul but beneficial for teaching and training, equipping us for “every good work” we’ll need to accomplish in life (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Wisdom is what allows us to make smart choices and understand the world around us. And it’s worth investing in and sharing with those we love—as Solomon wished to do for his son. We can feel good about feasting on God’s wisdom in the Bible. It’s a sweet treat that we can enjoy without limit—in fact, we’re encouraged to! God, thank You for the sweetness of Your Scriptures!

By: [Kirsten Holmberg](https://odb.org/author/kirstenholmberg/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What wisdom do you need to consume today? How has God’s wisdom been sweet to you?

God, please nourish us with Your wisdom.

#### **Insight**

The book of Proverbs helps us theologically, practically, and ethically. It helps us theologically by describing the nature of wisdom as centered in God, practically by guiding us toward skillful living, and ethically by showing us how to live both individually and in community.

Some of the many practical topics that guide us toward wise living include: family relationships (6:20), sexual ethics (6:23–29), taking care of the poor (14:21; 19:17; 28:27), listening to advice (9:7–9), work ethics (10:4–5), business ethics (11:1, 26), life-planning (16:1–3, 9, 33), dealing with authority (23:1–3), relationships with friends/neighbors (24:28–29; 27:14), conflict (26:17, 20–21), anger (27:3), and the danger of pride (29:23).

Adapted from Understanding the Bible: The Wisdom Books by Tremper Longman. To read more, visit [discoveryseries.org/q0422](https://discoveryseries.org/q0422).

# God Calling – 1/2/20

# Arm of Love

You are to help to save others. Never let one day pass when you have not reached out an arm of Love to someone outside your home - a note, a letter, a visit, help in some way.

Be full of Joy. Joy saves. Joy cures. Joy in Me. In every ray of sunlight, every smile, every act of kindness, or love, every trifling service - joy.

Each day do something to lift another soul out of the sea of sin, or disease or doubt into which man has fallen.  I still walk today by the lakeside and call My Disciples to follow Me and to become fishers of men.

The helping hand is needed that raises the helpless to courage, to struggle, to faith, to health. Love. Laugh. Love and laughter are the beckoners to faith and courage. Trust on, love on, joy on.

Refuse to be downcast. Refuse to be checked in your upward climb. Love and laugh. I am with you. I bear your burdens. Cast your burden upon Me and I will sustain thee. And then in very lightheartedness you turn and help another with the burden that is pressing too heavily upon him or her.

How many burdens can you lighten this year? How many hearts can you cheer? How many souls can you help?

And in giving you gain:  ‘Good measure, pressed down, and running over.’  I your Lord have said it. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.   Psalm 27:14

# My Utmost for His Highest – 1/3/20

# Clouds and Darkness



Clouds and darkness surround Him… —[Psalm 97:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Psalm+97%3A2)

A person who has not been born again by the Spirit of God will tell you that the teachings of Jesus are simple. But when he is baptized by the Holy Spirit, he finds that ‘clouds and darkness surround Him….’ When we come into close contact with the teachings of Jesus Christ we have our first realization of this. The only possible way to have full understanding of the teachings of Jesus is through the light of the Spirit of God shining inside us. If we have never had the experience of taking our casual, religious shoes off our casual, religious feet— getting rid of all the excessive informality with which we approach God— it is questionable whether we have ever stood in His presence. The people who are flippant and disrespectful in their approach to God are those who have never been introduced to Jesus Christ. Only after the amazing delight and liberty of realizing what Jesus Christ does, comes the impenetrable ‘darkness’ of realizing who He is.

Jesus said, ‘The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life’ ([John 6:63](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:63)). Once, the Bible was just so many words to us — ‘clouds and darkness’— then, suddenly, the words become spirit and life because Jesus re-speaks them to us when our circumstances make the words new. That is the way God speaks to us; not by visions and dreams, but by words. When a man gets to God, it is by the most simple way— words.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

Am I becoming more and more in love with God as a holy God, or with the conception of an amiable Being who says, ‘Oh well, sin doesn’t matter much’?  Disciples Indeed, 389 L

# CCEL – 1/3/20

**He led them forth by the right way.**—[PSA. 107:7.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.107.html" \l "Ps.107.7)

He found [Jacob] in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him.—Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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.

The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.—For this GOD is our GOD for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death. Who teacheth like him?

[Deut. 32:10-12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.32.html" \l "Deut.32.10). -[Isa. 46:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.46.html#Isa.46.4).[Psa. 23:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.23.html" \l "Ps.23.3).[Isa. 58:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.58.html" \l "Isa.58.11). -[Psa. 48:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.48.html#Ps.48.14).[Job 36:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.36.html" \l "Job.36.22).

‘I will give thee for a covenant of the people.’ [Isaiah 49:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.49.html" \l "Isa.49.8)

Jesus Christ is himself the sum and substance of the covenant, and as one of its gifts. He is the property of every believer. Believer, canst thou estimate what thou hast gotten in Christ? ‘In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.’ Consider that word ‘God’ and its infinity, and then meditate upon ‘perfect man’ and all his beauty; for all that Christ, as God and man, ever had, or can have, is thine—out of pure free favour, passed over to thee to be thine entailed property forever. Our blessed Jesus, as God, is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent. Will it not console you to know that all these great and glorious attributes are altogether yours? Has he power? That power is yours to support and strengthen you, to overcome your enemies, and to preserve you even to the end. Has he love? Well, there is not a drop of love in his heart which is not yours; you may dive into the immense ocean of his love, and you may say of it all, ‘It is mine.’ Hath he justice? It may seem a stern attribute, but even that is yours, for he will by his justice see to it that all which is promised to you in the covenant of grace shall be most certainly secured to you. And all that he has as perfect man is yours. As a perfect man the Father’s delight was upon him. He stood accepted by the Most High. O believer, God’s acceptance of Christ is thine acceptance; for knowest thou not that the love which the Father set on a perfect Christ, he sets on thee now? For all that Christ did is thine. That perfect righteousness which Jesus wrought out, when through his stainless life he kept the law and made it honourable, is thine, and is imputed to thee. Christ is in the covenant.

‘My God, I am thine—what a comfort divine!

What a blessing to know that the Saviour is mine!

In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,

And my heart it doth dance at the sound of his name.’

# Word Live – 1/3/20

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

# Scripture Union – 1/3/20

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

# Today in the Word – 1/3/20

# Boasting Only in Christ

**Read:** [**Galatians 6:11–18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6%3a11%e2%80%9318)

### **Not Circumcision but the New Creation**

11See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

12Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh. 14May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6%3a11%e2%80%9318#fen-NIV-29203a)] the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. 16Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6%3a11%e2%80%9318#fen-NIV-29205b)] the Israel of God.

17From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

18The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Galatians 6:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6%3a11%e2%80%9318#en-NIV-29203) Or whom
2. [Galatians 6:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6%3a11%e2%80%9318#en-NIV-29205) Or rule and to

Having preached the gospel to millions, the Rev. Billy Graham created an outstanding legacy. How does someone so well-known stay humble? To remind himself to always give Jesus Christ the glory, Graham kept Galatians 6:14 posted on the walls of his bedroom, dining room, bathroom, and in several other spots throughout his home: “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (NKJV).

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Galatians 6:14

At the end of his letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul reminded his readers that what matters was not being circumcised but rather being part of the new creation. Throughout his letter, with deep passion and frustration, Paul was teaching the Jewish and non-Jewish Christians the true gospel of Jesus. He wanted them to know how the gospel creates a new, multiethnic family which transforms people by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul was calling out the Jewish Christian leaders on their wrong and confusing message regarding the Jewish law as well as their cowardly lifestyles (vv.12–13).

Then in verse 14, Paul contrasts himself with those who stress the need for circumcision. They wanted to boast in their accomplishments before others, while Paul wanted to boast only in what Jesus Christ has done through His saving work on the cross. Verse 15 summarizes his letter nicely: “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.”

We shouldn’t be surprised that Billy Graham’s life verse was about boasting only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Similar to Paul, Graham surrendered his life to the Lord’s will, and God used him mightily. It is hard to imagine what the world would be like without Graham’s passion to “never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14).

**>>** What would it look like to boast in God’s work instead of your own? Try to become more aware of ways you can exalt the name of Jesus and God’s work in your life.

## BY This Month's Author

# Our Daily Bread – 1/3/20

# God Waited



**Read: Isaiah 30:8–18**

8Go now, write it on a tablet for them,  
    inscribe it on a scroll,  
that for the days to come  
    it may be an everlasting witness.  
9For these are rebellious people, deceitful children,  
    children unwilling to listen to the Lord’s instruction.  
10They say to the seers,  
    “See no more visions!”  
and to the prophets,  
    “Give us no more visions of what is right!  
Tell us pleasant things,  
    prophesy illusions.  
11Leave this way,  
    get off this path,  
and stop confronting us  
    with the Holy One of Israel!”

12Therefore this is what the Holy One of Israel says:

“Because you have rejected this message,  
    relied on oppression  
    and depended on deceit,  
13this sin will become for you  
    like a high wall, cracked and bulging,  
    that collapses suddenly, in an instant.  
14It will break in pieces like pottery,  
    shattered so mercilessly  
that among its pieces not a fragment will be found  
    for taking coals from a hearth  
    or scooping water out of a cistern.”

15This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says:

“In repentance and rest is your salvation,  
    in quietness and trust is your strength,  
    but you would have none of it.  
16You said, ‘No, we will flee on horses.’  
    Therefore you will flee!  
You said, ‘We will ride off on swift horses.’  
    Therefore your pursuers will be swift!  
17A thousand will flee  
    at the threat of one;  
at the threat of five  
    you will all flee away,  
till you are left  
    like a flagstaff on a mountaintop,  
    like a banner on a hill.”

18Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you;  
    therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.  
For the Lord is a God of justice.  
    Blessed are all who wait for him!

The Lord longs to be gracious to you. Isaiah 30:18

When Denise Levertov was just twelve, long before she became a renowned poet, she had the gumption to mail a package of poetry to the great poet T. S. Eliot. She then waited for a reply. Surprisingly, Eliot sent two pages of handwritten encouragement. In the preface to her collection The Stream and the Sapphire, she explained how the poems “trace [her] own movement from agnosticism to Christian faith.” It’s powerful, then, to recognize how one of the later poems (“Annunciation”) narrates Mary’s surrender to God. Noting the Holy Spirit’s refusal to overwhelm Mary and His desire for Mary to freely receive the Christ child, these two words blaze at the poem’s center: “God waited.”

In Mary’s story, Levertov recognized her own. God waited, eager to love her. He would not force anything upon her. He waited. Isaiah described this same reality, how God stood ready, eager with anticipation, to shower Israel with tender love. “The Lord longs to be gracious to you . . . to show you compassion” (30:18). He was ready to flood His people with kindness, and yet God waited for them to willingly receive what He offered (v. 19).

It’s a wonder that our Creator, the Savior of the world, chooses to wait for us to welcome Him. The God who could so easily overpower us practices humble patience. The Holy One waits for us.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

In what areas of your life has God been waiting for you? How might you surrender to Him?

God, it boggles my mind that You wait for me. Wait? For me? This makes me trust You, desire You. Please come. Give me Your full self.

#### **Insight**

In Isaiah 30:18, the words translated longs (“the Lord longs”) and wait (“all who wait for him”) are the same word in the original language. In one verse we see both the waiting of God and the waiting of man. Isaiah 8:17 also uses this word: “I will wait for the Lord.” Whether the subject of the waiting is God or humans, we’re the ones who benefit, and God is to be praised.

By: [**Arthur Jackson**](https://odb.org/author/arthurjackson/)

# God Calling – 1/3/20

# The Way Wide Open

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.  Isaiah 40:31

You must be renewed, remade. Christ, Christ, Christ. Everything must rest on Me. Force is born of rest. Only Love is a conquering force. Be not afraid, I will help you.

Be channels both of you. My Spirit shall flow through and My Spirit shall, in flowing through, sweep away all the bitter past.

Take heart. God loves, God helps, God fights, God wins.  You shall see.  You shall know. The way will open. All My Love has ever planned, all My Love has ever thought, you shall see each day unfold. Only be taught. Just like a child. A child never questions plans. It accepts gladly.

Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.  Mark 10:15

# My Utmost for His Highest – 1/4/20

# Why Can I Not Follow You Now?



Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow You now?’ —[John 13:37](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+13%3A37)

There are times when you can’t understand why you cannot do what you want to do. When God brings a time of waiting, and appears to be unresponsive, don’t fill it with busyness, just wait. The time of waiting may come to teach you the meaning of sanctification— to be set apart from sin and made holy— or it may come after the process of sanctification has begun to teach you what service means. Never run before God gives you His direction. If you have the slightest doubt, then He is not guiding. Whenever there is doubt— wait.

At first you may see clearly what God’s will is— the severance of a friendship, the breaking off of a business relationship, or something else you feel is distinctly God’s will for you to do. But never act on the impulse of that feeling. If you do, you will cause difficult situations to arise which will take years to untangle. Wait for God’s timing and He will do it without any heartache or disappointment. When it is a question of the providential will of God, wait for God to move.

Peter did not wait for God. He predicted in his own mind where the test would come, and it came where he did not expect it. ‘I will lay down my life for Your sake.’ Peter’s statement was honest but ignorant. ‘Jesus answered him, ‘…the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times’ ‘ ([John 13:38](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13:38)). This was said with a deeper knowledge of Peter than Peter had of himself. He could not follow Jesus because he did not know himself or his own capabilities well enough. Natural devotion may be enough to attract us to Jesus, to make us feel His irresistible charm, but it will never make us disciples. Natural devotion will deny Jesus, always falling short of what it means to truly follow Him.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

Am I becoming more and more in love with God as a holy God, or with the conception of an amiable Being who says, ‘Oh well, sin doesn’t matter much’?  Disciples Indeed, 389 L

# CCEL – 1/4/20

**Ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you.**—[DEUT. 12:9.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.12.html" \l "Deut.12.9)

This is not your rest.—There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.—Within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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.—With Christ; which is far better.

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.—There the wicked cease from troubling: and there the weary be at rest.

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.—Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

-[Mic. 2:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mic.2.html" \l "Mic.2.10). -[Heb. 4:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.4.html" \l "Heb.4.9). -[Heb. 6:19,20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.6.html" \l "Heb.6.19).[John 14:2,3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.14.html" \l "John.14.2). -[Phi. 1:23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html" \l "Phil.1.23).[Rev. 21:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.21.html" \l "Rev.21.4). -[Job 3:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.3.html" \l "Job.3.17).[Matt. 6:20,21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.6.html" \l "Matt.6.20). -[Col. 3:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.3.html" \l "Col.3.2).

‘Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ [2 Peter 3:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiPet.3.html" \l "iiPet.3.18)

‘Grow in grace’—not in one grace only, but in all grace. Grow in that root-grace, faith. Believe the promises more firmly than you have done. Let faith increase in fulness, constancy, simplicity. Grow also in love. Ask that your love may become extended, more intense, more practical, influencing every thought, word, and deed. Grow likewise in humility. Seek to lie very low, and know more of your own nothingness. As you grow downward in humility, seek also to grow upward—having nearer approaches to God in prayer and more intimate fellowship with Jesus. May God the Holy Spirit enable you to ‘grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.’ He who grows not in the knowledge of Jesus, refuses to be blessed. To know him is ‘life eternal,’ and to advance in the knowledge of him is to increase in happiness. He who does not long to know more of Christ, knows nothing of him yet. Whoever hath sipped this wine will thirst for more, for although Christ doth satisfy, yet it is such a satisfaction, that the appetite is not cloyed, but whetted. If you know the love of Jesus—as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so will you pant after deeper draughts of his love. If you do not desire to know him better, then you love him not, for love always cries, ‘Nearer, nearer.’ Absence from Christ is hell; but the presence of Jesus is heaven. Rest not then content without an increasing acquaintance with Jesus. Seek to know more of him in his divine nature, in his human relationship, in his finished work, in his death, in his resurrection, in his present glorious intercession, and in his future royal advent. Abide hard by the Cross, and search the mystery of his wounds. An increase of love to Jesus, and a more perfect apprehension of his love to us is one of the best tests of growth in grace.

# Word Live – 1/4/20

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

# Scripture Union – 1/4/20

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

# Today in the Word – 1/4/20

# Our Daily Compass

**Read:** [**Hebrews 4:12–16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+4%3a12%e2%80%9316)

12For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

### **Jesus the Great High Priest**

14Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+4%3a12%e2%80%9316" \l "fen-NIV-30029a" \o "See footnote a)] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Hebrews 4:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+4%3a12%e2%80%9316#en-NIV-30029) Greek has gone through the heavens

While Billy Graham was a spiritual advisor and counselor to dozens of world leaders, he went to one person for counsel, his wife Ruth. “She is a great student of the Bible. Her life is ruled by the Bible more than any person I’ve ever known,” said the late evangelist. Ruth Bell Graham’s passion for God’s Word helped her speak the truth. For instance, when Billy was under pressure to run for political office, Ruth advised: “When God calls you to be an evangelist, you don’t stoop to be president.”

For the word of God is alive and active. Hebrews 4:12

God’s Word was “alive and active” for the Grahams, and it is just as powerful for you and me. The author of Hebrews says God’s Word is the most powerful tool on the planet. In the first century, a double-edged sword was used for earthly battles, but the author asserts that God’s Word is used for spiritual battles. Notice the way the author uses the characteristics of a sword to highlight the power of Scripture. Spending time in God’s Word allows God’s truth to cut through our defenses and convicts us of even the most hidden sin (v. 12). It “judges the thoughts and attitudes” of our heart (v. 12). The truth of God’s Word reveals what is hidden within us, because “nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight” (v. 13).

The good news, or gospel message, is that even though God knows our sinfulness, He sent His Son to bridge the gap. Jesus stands as our great high priest appealing before God the Father on our behalf (v. 14). Because Jesus was tempted in every way, He sympathizes with us in our times of need (v. 15). Therefore, we have no reason not to approach the throne of grace with confidence (v. 16).

**>>** Ruth Bell Graham called the Bible her rule book, her compass. What is your compass? What helps you navigate your daily decisions? Too often we turn to the daily newscast, a popular author, or even well meaning friends to give advice. Instead, ask God to direct you through the study of His Word.

### Apply the Word

## BY This Month's Author

# Our Daily Bread – 1/4/20

# Perfectly Placed

 **Read: Job 38:4–11**

4“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?  
    Tell me, if you understand.  
5Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!  
    Who stretched a measuring line across it?  
6On what were its footings set,  
    or who laid its cornerstone—  
7while the morning stars sang together  
    and all the angels[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+38%3A4%E2%80%9311&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13801a)] shouted for joy?

8“Who shut up the sea behind doors  
    when it burst forth from the womb,  
9when I made the clouds its garment  
    and wrapped it in thick darkness,  
10when I fixed limits for it  
    and set its doors and bars in place,  
11when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther;  
    here is where your proud waves halt’?

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Job 38:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+38%3A4%E2%80%9311&version=NIV#en-NIV-13801) Hebrew the sons of God

Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Job 38:4

Scientists know our planet is precisely the right distance from the sun to benefit from its heat. A little closer and all the water would evaporate, as on Venus. Only a bit farther and everything would freeze like it does on Mars. Earth is also just the right size to generate the right amount of gravity. Less would make everything weightlessly sterile like our moon, while more gravity would trap poisonous gases that suffocate life as on Jupiter.

The intricate physical, chemical, and biological interactions that comprise our world bear the imprint of a sophisticated Designer. We catch a glimpse of this complex craftsmanship when God speaks to Job about things beyond our understanding. “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” God asks. “Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone?” (Job 38:4–6).

This glimpse of creation’s magnitude causes us to wonder at Earth’s mighty oceans bowing before the One who “shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, . . . [who said] ‘This far you may come and no farther’ ” (vv. 8–11). In wonder may we sing with the morning stars and shout for joy with the angels (v. 7), for this elaborate world was made for us that we might know and trust God.

By: [Remi Oyedele](https://odb.org/author/remioyedele/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How does God’s amazing creation cause you to praise Him today? What about its design reveals a Maker?

Thank You, Creator God, for this elaborate world You designed for us.

#### **Insight**

After more than thirty-five chapters of debate between Job and his accusers, a new conversation takes place—Job hears from God Himself! Throughout most of these chapters, as Job’s friends were accusing him, Job was accusing God. In fact, Job actually demands that He come and answer for His actions: “Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing” (Job 31:35). Now, at the end of Job’s story, the Creator comes to respond to the charges Job has raised against Him (chs. 38–41), centering His response in a series of questions. Job bows before God and acknowledges his own weakness, saying, “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know” (42:3). A true encounter with the Almighty is a humbling experience.

To learn more about God in today’s culture, visit [bit.ly/2L5fPoq](https://bit.ly/2L5fPoq).

By: [**Bill Crowder**](https://odb.org/author/billcrowder/)

# God Calling – 1/4/20

# Do Not Plan

Shew us Thy Way, O Lord, and let us walk in Thy paths. Lead us in Thy Truth and teach us.

All is well.  Wonderful things are happening. Do not limit God at all. He cares and provides.

Uproot self - the channel blocker. Do not plan ahead, the way will unfold step by step. Leave tomorrow's burden. Christ is the Great Burdenbearer. You cannot bear His load and He only expects you to carry a little day-share.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

# My Utmost for His Highest – 1/5/20

# The Life of Power to Follow



Jesus answered him, ‘Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.’ —[John 13:36](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+13%3A36)

‘And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me’ ‘ ([John 21:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+21:19)). Three years earlier Jesus had said, ‘Follow Me’ ([Matthew 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4:19)), and Peter followed with no hesitation. The irresistible attraction of Jesus was upon him and he did not need the Holy Spirit to help him do it. Later he came to the place where he denied Jesus, and his heart broke. Then he received the Holy Spirit and Jesus said again, ‘Follow Me’ ([John 21:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+21:19)). Now no one is in front of Peter except the Lord Jesus Christ. The first ‘Follow Me’ was nothing mysterious; it was an external following. Jesus is now asking for an internal sacrifice and yielding (see [John 21:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+21:18)).

Between these two times Peter denied Jesus with oaths and curses (see [Matthew 26:69-75](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26:69-75)). But then he came completely to the end of himself and all of his self-sufficiency. There was no part of himself he would ever rely on again. In his state of destitution, he was finally ready to receive all that the risen Lord had for him. ‘…He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ ‘ ([John 20:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:22)). No matter what changes God has performed in you, never rely on them. Build only on a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and on the Spirit He gives.

All our promises and resolutions end in denial because we have no power to accomplish them. When we come to the end of ourselves, not just mentally but completely, we are able to ‘receive the Holy Spirit.’ ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ — the idea is that of invasion. There is now only One who directs the course of your life, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We are not to preach the doing of good things; good deeds are not to be preached, they are to be performed.  
[So Send I You](http://www.dhp.org/Products/So-Send-I-You-emandem-Workmen-of-God__9741.aspx)

# CCEL – 1/5/20

**We which have believed do enter into rest.**—[HEB. 4:3.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.4.html" \l "Heb.4.3)

They weary themselves to commit iniquity.—I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works.—Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.—This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.

[Jer. 9:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.9.html" \l "Jer.9.5). -[Rom. 7:23,24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.7.html" \l "Rom.7.23).[Matt. 11:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.11.html" \l "Matt.11.28). -[Rom. 5:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.5.html" \l "Rom.5.1).[Heb. 4:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.4.html" \l "Heb.4.10). -[Phi. 3:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.3.html" \l "Phil.3.9). -[Isa. 28:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.28.html" \l "Isa.28.12).

‘And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.’

### [Genesis 1:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.1.html" \l "Gen.1.4)

Light might well be good since it sprang from that fiat of goodness, ‘Let there be light.’ We who enjoy it should be more grateful for it than we are, and see more of God in it and by it. Light physical is said by Solomon to be sweet, but gospel light is infinitely more precious, for it reveals eternal things, and ministers to our immortal natures. When the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual light, and opens our eyes to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we behold sin in its true colours, and ourselves in our real position; we see the Most Holy God as he reveals himself, the plan of mercy as he propounds it, and the world to come as the Word describes it. Spiritual light has many beams and prismatic colours, but whether they be knowledge, joy, holiness, or life, all are divinely good. If the light received be thus good, what must the essential light be, and how glorious must be the place where he reveals himself. O Lord, since light is so good, give us more of it, and more of thyself, the true light.

No sooner is there a good thing in the world, than a division is necessary. Light and darkness have no communion; God has divided them, let us not confound them. Sons of light must not have fellowship with deeds, doctrines, or deceits of darkness. The children of the day must be sober, honest, and bold in their Lord’s work, leaving the works of darkness to those who shall dwell in it forever. Our Churches should by discipline divide the light from the darkness, and we should by our distinct separation from the world do the same. In judgment, in action, in hearing, in teaching, in association, we must discern between the precious and the vile, and maintain the great distinction which the Lord made upon the world’s first day. O Lord Jesus, be thou our light throughout the whole of this day, for thy light is the light of men.

# Word Live – 1/5/20

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

# Scripture Union – 1/5/20

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

# Today in the Word – 1/5/20

# Lay Hold of the Bible

# [Colossians 3:15–17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3a15%e2%80%9317)

15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Before becoming the fourth president of Moody Bible Institute, William Henry “Will” Houghton pastored several churches in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and New York. Biographer Wilbur Smith said of him, “Two primary passions possessed the soul of Will Houghton: evangelism and the study of the Word of God.” Houghton’s legacy can still be seen at Moody, specifically his advocacy for Moody Radio programs to be broadcast regularly and widely. He was convinced that God uses the Scripture to transform lives.

Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly. Colossians 3:16

Today’s passage from the apostle Paul’s letter to the believers in Colossae was one of Houghton’s favorites. These verses follow Paul’s teaching that we have been made alive in Christ. Here, Paul explains what a difference that makes. In verse 15, Paul uses an imperative for the word “to rule” as he wants Christians to have peace with themselves and with each other. In verse 16, Paul uses another imperative when he urges the message of Christ, or the Word of Christ, “to dwell” in us richly. These two words, “rule” and “dwell,” signal a needed action on our part.

Paul urges Christ followers to live a life soaked in Scripture. Colossians 3:16, in particular, encourages believers to allow God’s Word to dwell in their hearts and lives in a deep and meaningful way. Bible study and teaching, reading Scripture, and music are important in this endeavor. Too often we read God’s Word or hear a sermon preached and quickly turn our mind to other things. Instead, we are urged to let the message of Christ soak in, to dwell in us richly, until it permeates everything we do. “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (v. 17). President Houghton was right: “Lay hold of the Bible until the Bible lays holds of you.”

**>>**Next time you read a passage of Scripture, don’t just read it once. Read it repeatedly and try praying slowly through the words of Scripture.

## BY This Month's Author

# Our Daily Bread – 1/5/20

# Shining the Light

**Read: Matthew 5:14–16**

14“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:14

Stephen told his parents that he needed to get to school early every day, but for some reason he never explained why it was so important. Yet they made sure he arrived at Northview High School by 7:15 each morning.

On a wintry day during his junior year, Stephen was in a car accident that sadly took his life. Later, his mom and dad found out why he’d been going to school so early. Each morning he and some friends had gathered at the school entrance to greet other students with a smile, a wave, and a kind word. It made all students—even those who weren’t popular—feel welcomed and accepted.

A believer in Jesus, Stephen wanted to share His joy with those who desperately needed it. His example lives on as a reminder that one of the best ways to shine the light of Christ’s love is by gestures of kindness and through a welcoming spirit.

In Matthew 5:14–16, Jesus reveals that in Him we’re “the light of the world” and “a town built on a hill” (v. 14). Ancient cities were often built of white limestone, truly standing out as they reflected the blazing sun. May we choose not to be hidden but to give light “to everyone in the house” (v. 15).

And as we “let [our] light shine before others” (v. 16), may they experience the welcoming love of Christ.

By: [Dave Branon](https://odb.org/author/davebranon/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What’s one way you could be more welcoming to the lonely and needy around you? How can the Holy Spirit help you be a city set on a hill for others to see?

Heavenly Father, thank You for Stephen’s example. Like him, help me to show kindness and a welcoming spirit to everyone I meet.

#### **Insight**

At the time Jesus spoke these words, most homes used small oil lamps for lighting, which were most effective placed on a lampstand. Covering a small lamp under a bowl (Matthew 5:14–16) would extinguish it. In describing His disciples as the “light of the world” (v. 14), Jesus emphasizes that it’s impossible to genuinely be a disciple of His kingdom without living according to the kingdom values described in Matthew 5. To live in opposition to these values is as useless and illogical as being tasteless, ineffective salt or invisible light (vv. 13, 15).

By: [**Monica La Rose**](https://odb.org/author/monicabrands/)

# God Calling – 1/5/20

# Hoard Nothing

Love Me and do My Will. No evil shall befall you. Take no thought for tomorrow. Rest in My presence brings Peace. God will help you. Desire brings fulfillment. Peace like a quiet flowing river cleanses, sweeps all irritants away.

You shall be taught, continue these prayer times, even if they seem fruitless. The devil will try by any means to stop them. Heed him not. He will say evil spirits may enter in. Heed him not.

Rest your nerves. Tired nerves are a reflection on, not of, God's Power. Hope all the time.

Do not be afraid of poverty. Let money flow freely. I will let it flow in but you must let it flow out. I never send money to stagnate - only to those who pass it on.  Keep nothing for yourself. Hoard nothing. Only have what you need and use. This is My Law of Discipleship.

Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.  Psalm 37:5

# My Utmost for His Highest – 1/6/20

# Worship



He moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. —[Genesis 12:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Genesis+12%3A8)

Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Be careful what you do with the best you have. Whenever you get a blessing from God, give it back to Him as a love-gift. Take time to meditate before God and offer the blessing back to Him in a deliberate act of worship. If you hoard it for yourself, it will turn into spiritual dry rot, as the manna did when it was hoarded (see [Exodus 16:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+16:20)). God will never allow you to keep a spiritual blessing completely for yourself. It must be given back to Him so that He can make it a blessing to others.

Bethel is the symbol of fellowship with God; Ai is the symbol of the world. Abram ‘pitched his tent’ between the two. The lasting value of our public service for God is measured by the depth of the intimacy of our private times of fellowship and oneness with Him. Rushing in and out of worship is wrong every time— there is always plenty of time to worship God. Days set apart for quiet can be a trap, detracting from the need to have daily quiet time with God. That is why we must ‘pitch our tents’ where we will always have quiet times with Him, however noisy our times with the world may be. There are not three levels of spiritual life— worship, waiting, and work. Yet some of us seem to jump like spiritual frogs from worship to waiting, and from waiting to work. God’s idea is that the three should go together as one. They were always together in the life of our Lord and in perfect harmony. It is a discipline that must be developed; it will not happen overnight.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Crises reveal character. When we are put to the test the hidden resources of our character are revealed exactly.  Disciples Indeed, 393 R

# CCEL – 1/6/20

**Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands.**—[PSA. 90:17.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.90.html" \l "Ps.90.17)

Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.—We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.—The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us.

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.—Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.

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.—Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

[Ezek. 16:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ezek.16.html" \l "Ezek.16.14). -[II Cor. 3:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.3.html" \l "iiCor.3.18). -[I Pet. 4:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.4.html" \l "iPet.4.14).[Psa. 128:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.128.html" \l "Ps.128.1). -[Prov. 16:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.16.html" \l "Prov.16.3).[Phi. 2:12,13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.12). -[II Thes. 2:16,17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiThess.2.html" \l "iiThess.2.16).

‘Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.’ [1 Peter 5:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.5.html" \l "iPet.5.7)

It is a happy way of soothing sorrow when we can feel—’HE careth for me.’ Christian! do not dishonour religion by always wearing a brow of care; come, cast your burden upon your Lord. You are staggering beneath a weight which your Father would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden, would be to him but as the small dust of the balance. Nothing is so sweet as to

‘Lie passive in God’s hands,

And know no will but his.’

O child of suffering, be thou patient; God has not passed thee over in his providence. He who is the feeder of sparrows, will also furnish you with what you need. Sit not down in despair; hope on, hope ever. Take up the arms of faith against a sea of trouble, and your opposition shall yet end your distresses. There is One who careth for you. His eye is fixed on you, his heart beats with pity for your woe, and his hand omnipotent shall yet bring you the needed help. The darkest cloud shall scatter itself in showers of mercy. The blackest gloom shall give place to the morning. He, if thou art one of his family, will bind up thy wounds, and heal thy broken heart. Doubt not his grace because of thy tribulation, but believe that he loveth thee as much in seasons of trouble as in times of happiness. What a serene and quiet life might you lead if you would leave providing to the God of providence! With a little oil in the cruse, and a handful of meal in the barrel, Elijah outlived the famine, and you will do the same. If God cares for you, why need you care too? Can you trust him for your soul, and not for your body? He has never refused to bear your burdens, he has never fainted under their weight. Come, then, soul! have done with fretful care, and leave all thy concerns in the hand of a gracious God.

# Word Live – 1/6/20

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

# Scripture Union – 1/6/20

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

# Today in the Word – 1/6/20

# Turn and Look

**Read:** [**Isaiah 45:22–25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+45%3a22%e2%80%9325)

22“Turn to me and be saved,  
    all you ends of the earth;  
    for I am God, and there is no other.  
23By myself I have sworn,  
    my mouth has uttered in all integrity  
    a word that will not be revoked:  
Before me every knee will bow;  
    by me every tongue will swear.  
24They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone  
    are deliverance and strength.’”  
All who have raged against him  
    will come to him and be put to shame.  
25But all the descendants of Israel  
    will find deliverance in the Lord  
    and will make their boast in him.

On a bitterly cold Sunday morning in 1850, a young man slipped into the back row of a tiny Methodist church. Since the head minister was delayed due to the storm, an uneducated deacon delivered a message. His text? “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 45:22 KJV). Near the end, the deacon looked at the strange boy sitting on the back pew and said, “Young man, you look very miserable. And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you do not obey my text.” He shouted, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ.” At that moment, a young Charles Spurgeon surrendered his life to the Lord.

Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth. Isaiah 45:22

The beginning verse of today’s passage convicted young Spurgeon and influenced him to become one of the greatest preachers of all time. Verse 22 states both the simplicity and the necessity of salvation. All we must do to receive salvation is “look” (KJV) or “turn” (NIV) to the Lord. Both convey the need to shift our attention to Jesus. Spurgeon was struck by the effortlessness of this declarative statement. It did not take years of deliberate effort but only a moment of looking to be saved. “In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength” (v. 24); salvation is not based on our efforts.

The power rests in God alone! And, this invitation is open to everyone, to “all you ends of the earth” (v. 22). Verses 23–25 elaborate on the concept of God’s matchlessness and power. The author writes that “every knee will bow” and every tongue will confess that only God is able to save (v. 23). This truth from God’s Word captivated a young Spurgeon exactly 170 years ago, and it continues to change lives today.

**>>** Have you looked for answers in the wrong places? Remember that the Lord wants us to look to Him. Turn your focus onto Him alone, trusting that He is sovereign. If you have never surrendered your life to the One who gives salvation, we encourage you to “turn” and “look” to Him today.

### **Apply the Word**

## BY This Month's Author

# Our Daily Bread – 1/6/20

# Mysterious Helpers

 **Read: Hebrews 13:1–3**

### **Concluding Exhortations**

13 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. 2Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. 3Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2

Louise suffers from muscular dystrophy. While trying to exit a train station one day, she found herself facing a large flight of stairs without an elevator or escalator. On the verge of tears, Louise saw a man suddenly appear, pick up her bag, and gently help her up the stairs. When she turned to thank him, he was gone.

Michael was late for a meeting. Already stressed from a relationship breakdown, he started battling London’s traffic only to get a flat tire. As he stood helplessly in the rain, a man stepped out of the crowd, opened the boot (trunk), jacked up the car, and changed the wheel. When Michael turned to thank him, he was gone.

Who were these mysterious helpers? Kind strangers, or something more?

The popular image we have of angels as radiant or winged creatures is only half true. While some appear this way (Isaiah 6:2; Matthew 28:3), others come with dusty feet, ready for a meal (Genesis 18:1­–5) and are easily mistaken for everyday people (Judges 13:16). The writer of Hebrews says that by showing hospitality to strangers, we can entertain angels without realizing it (13:2).

We don’t know if Louise and Michael’s helpers were angels. But according to Scripture, they could have been. Angels are at work right now, helping God’s people (Hebrews 1:14). And they can appear as ordinary as a person on the street.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What do you know about angels? Can you think of an instance when you may have encountered one without realizing it at the time?

Thank You, God, for the angels You send, meeting us in our time of need.

#### **Insight**

Scholars are uncertain of the author, date, and audience of the book of Hebrews, but it appears to be written for Jews (Hebrews) who are evaluating the claims of Jesus or struggling with their faith. Chapters 1–10 point to the superiority of Christ to the angels, Moses, and the high priests.

In chapter 13, the author concludes his letter with final exhortations. Verse 1 begins with a call to maintain brotherly love and then verse 2 encourages readers to go further by extending love to strangers (those outside the community) by offering meals and lodging. This command is reinforced by the observation that some people “have shown hospitality to angels” without knowing it, and points to Abraham, Gideon, and Manoah and his wife’s encounters (Genesis 18:2, 16; Judges 6:11; 13:2–11). Verse 3 calls readers to remember (and extend empathy) to prisoners and the mistreated.

By: [**Alyson Kieda**](https://odb.org/author/akieda/)

# God Calling – 1/6/20

# Sharp and Ready

Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah,   
Pilgrim through this foreign land.   
I am weak but Thou art mighty,   
Guide me with Thy powerful Hand.

You must pray.  The way will open. God cares and His plans unfold. Just love and wait.

Love is the key. No door is too difficult for it to open.

What cause have you to fear? Has He not cared for and protected you? Hope on. Hope gladly. Hope with certainty. Be calm, calm in My Power.

Never neglect these times, pray and read your Bible and train and discipline yourself. That is your work - Mine to use you. But My instruments must be sharp and ready.  Then I use them.

Discipline and perfect yourselves at all costs. Do this for soon every fleeting thought will be answered, every wish gratified, every deed used. It is a fearful Power, a mighty Power. Oh! be careful that you ask nothing amiss - nothing that is not according to My Spirit.

All thoughts harmful must be turned out. See how necessary I have made the purity and goodness of your own lives to you. Soon, you shall ask and at once it will come. Welcome the training. Without it I dare not give you this Power.

Do not worry about other's lives. You must perfect yourselves first in My Strength. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.  2 Timothy 2:15