# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/29/20

# Deserter or Disciple?



From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. —[John 6:66](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+6%3A66)

When God, by His Spirit through His Word, gives you a clear vision of His will, you must “walk in the light” of that vision ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)). Even though your mind and soul may be thrilled by it, if you don’t “walk in the light” of it you will sink to a level of bondage never envisioned by our Lord. Mentally disobeying the “heavenly vision” ([Acts 26:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26:19)) will make you a slave to ideas and views that are completely foreign to Jesus Christ. Don’t look at someone else and say, “Well, if he can have those views and prosper, why can’t I?” You have to “walk in the light” of the vision that has been given to you. Don’t compare yourself with others or judge them— that is between God and them. When you find that one of your favorite and strongly held views clashes with the “heavenly vision,” do not begin to debate it. If you do, a sense of property and personal right will emerge in you— things on which Jesus placed no value. He was against these things as being the root of everything foreign to Himself— “…for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” ([Luke 12:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+12:15)). If we don’t see and understand this, it is because we are ignoring the underlying principles of our Lord’s teaching.

Our tendency is to lie back and bask in the memory of the wonderful experience we had when God revealed His will to us. But if a New Testament standard is revealed to us by the light of God, and we don’t try to measure up, or even feel inclined to do so, then we begin to backslide. It means your conscience does not respond to the truth. You can never be the same after the unveiling of a truth. That moment marks you as one who either continues on with even more devotion as a disciple of Jesus Christ, or as one who turns to go back as a deserter.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Jesus Christ can afford to be misunderstood; we cannot. Our weakness lies in always wanting to vindicate ourselves.  The Place of Help, 1051 L

# CCEL – 12/29/20

**Understanding what the will of the Lord is.**—[EPH. 5:17.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.5.html" \l "Eph.5.17)

This is the will of God, even your sanctification.—Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.—This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.—We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

We . . . do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.—The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, . . . give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.

[I Thes. 4:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.4.html" \l "iThess.4.3). -[Job 22:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.22.html" \l "Job.22.21). -[John 17:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.3). -[I John 5:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.5.html" \l "iJohn.5.20).[Col. 1:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.1.html" \l "Col.1.9). -[Eph. 1:17-19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.17).

“Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” [1 Samuel 7:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iSam.7.html" \l "iSam.7.12)

The word “hitherto” seems like a hand pointing in the direction of the past. Twenty years or seventy, and yet, “hitherto the Lord hath helped!” Through poverty, through wealth, through sickness, through health, at home, abroad, on the land, on the sea, in honour, in dishonour, in perplexity, in joy, in trial, in triumph, in prayer, in temptation, “hitherto hath the Lord helped us!” We delight to look down a long avenue of trees. It is delightful to gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of verdant temple, with its branching pillars and its arches of leaves; even so look down the long aisles of your years, at the green boughs of mercy overhead, and the strong pillars of lovingkindness and faithfulness which bear up your joys. Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely there must be many, and they all sing of mercy received “hitherto.”

But the word also points forward. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes “hitherto,” he is not yet at the end, there is still a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys; more temptations, more triumphs; more prayers, more answers; more toils, more strength; more fights, more victories; and then come sickness, old age, disease, death. Is it over now? No! there is more yet-awakening in Jesus’ likeness, thrones, harps, songs, psalms, white raiment, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fulness of eternity, the infinity of bliss. O be of good courage, believer, and with grateful confidence raise thy “Ebenezer,” for—

He who hath helped thee hitherto

Will help thee all thy journey through.

When read in heaven’s light how glorious and marvellous a prospect will thy “hitherto” unfold to thy grateful eye!

# Word Live – 12/29/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/29/20

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# Today in the Word – 12/29/20

# Christ's Second Advent

**Read:** [**Acts 1:1–11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3a1%e2%80%9311)

### **Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven**

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5For John baptized with[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3a1%e2%80%9311#fen-NIV-26929a)] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3a1%e2%80%9311#fen-NIV-26929b)] the Holy Spirit.”

6Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

7He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

9After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Acts 1:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3a1%e2%80%9311#en-NIV-26929) Or in
2. [Acts 1:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3a1%e2%80%9311#en-NIV-26929) Or in

“Every true Christian is a citizen of two worlds,” wrote Martin Luther King Jr., “the world of time and the world of eternity. We are, paradoxically, in the world and yet not of the world... As Christians, we must never surrender our supreme loyalty to any time-bound custom or earth-bound idea, for at the heart of our universe is a higher reality—God and his kingdom of love—to which we must be conformed.”

This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back. Acts 1:11

One of the best ways to celebrate Christ’s first Advent is to pray with keen anticipation for His Second Advent. Following His resurrection, for 40 days Jesus appeared to many people and “gave many convincing proofs that he was alive” (v. 3). As His time on earth drew to a close, He instructed His followers to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit (vv. 4–5; see Acts 2).

Jesus’ followers naturally wondered what would happen next. Some were expecting the Messiah to set up His kingdom (v. 6). He told them, however, that the time for that had not yet come (v. 7). They were to spread the good news throughout the world (v. 8). The promised Holy Spirit would be the One empowering them to carry out this mission! When Jesus ascended into heaven, His disciples stared up into the sky, stunned (v. 10). Was this a temporary disappearance? Would He return? Two angels definitively answered this question: “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (v. 11). And here, you and I today as His church are still waiting eagerly for Christ’s return!

**Apply the Word**

Are you eagerly waiting for Christ’s return? Sometimes we avoid talking about the Second Coming because it feels controversial or risky. But Paul commanded us to encourage one another with this truth (1 Thess. 4:16–18).

### **Pray with Us**

Lord, as we look forward to the Second Coming, we are aware that we join countless Christians in a vigil that began when you ascended. Teach us to live according to the guidance of your Spirit.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/29/20

# Unseen Realities

 **Read:** [**Ephesians 6:10–20**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.10%E2%80%9320)

### **The Armor of God**

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. 19Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but . . . against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.  [Ephesians 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.12)

In 1876, men drilling for coal in central Indiana thought they had found the gates of hell. Historian John Barlow Martin reports that at six hundred feet, “foul fumes issued forth amid awesome noises.” Afraid they had “bitten into the roof of the devil’s cave,” the miners plugged the well and scurried back to their homes.

The miners, of course, were mistaken—and some years later, they would drill again and be rich in natural gas. Even though they were mistaken, I find myself a little jealous of them. These miners lived with an awareness of the spiritual world that is often missing from my own life. It’s easy for me to live as if the supernatural and the natural rarely intersect and to forget that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but . . . against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” ([Ephesians 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.12)).

When we see evil winning in our world, we shouldn’t give in or try to fight it in our own strength. Instead, we’re to resist evil by putting on “the full armor of God” (vv. 13–18). Studying Scripture, meeting regularly with other believers for encouragement, and making choices with the good of others in mind can help us “stand against the devil’s schemes” (v. 11). Equipped by the Holy Spirit, we can stand firm in the face of anything (v. 13).

By:  [Amy Peterson](https://odb.org/author/petersonamy/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How can you cultivate an awareness of the reality of the spiritual world? Is God calling you to “put on” some part of the “armor” Paul describes? What might that look like today?

Help me to remember, God, to walk and serve by faith and in Your power.

#### **Insight**

In Paul’s day, Roman soldiers would carry a large wooden shield covered in leather in battle, wetting the leather to extinguish any fire-tipped arrows fired from the opposing side. In battle, the first row of soldiers would carry their shields in front, while the rows behind would hold their shields above their heads, effectively protecting the unit from nearly all incoming threats. This was called a testudo (or tortoise) formation because it resembled a tortoise shell.

In [Ephesians 6:10–20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.10%E2%80%9320), Paul subtly inverts this military image to describe believers’ resistance to evil forces. Paul relies on imagery from [Isaiah 59:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2059.17), which describes God’s righteousness in restoring His exiled people. The metaphor reveals that the only way for believers to stand firm against evil is through continual reliance on “the Lord and . . . his mighty power” ([Ephesians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.10)).

# God Calling – 12/29/20

# Work and Prayer

Work and prayer represent the two forces that will ensure your success. Your work and My work.

For prayer, believing prayer, is based on the certainty that I am working for you and with you and in you.

Go forward gladly and unafraid. I am with you. With men your task may be impossible, but with God all things are possible.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:13

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/30/20

# “And Every Virtue We Possess”



…All my springs are in you. —[Psalm 87:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Psalm+87%3A7)

Our Lord never “patches up” our natural virtues, that is, our natural traits, qualities, or characteristics. He completely remakes a person on the inside— “…put on the new man…” ([Ephesians 4:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4:24)). In other words, see that your natural human life is putting on all that is in keeping with the new life. The life God places within us develops its own new virtues, not the virtues of the seed of Adam, but of Jesus Christ. Once God has begun the process of sanctification in your life, watch and see how God causes your confidence in your own natural virtues and power to wither away. He will continue until you learn to draw your life from the reservoir of the resurrection life of Jesus. Thank God if you are going through this drying-up experience!

The sign that God is at work in us is that He is destroying our confidence in the natural virtues, because they are not promises of what we are going to be, but only a wasted reminder of what God created man to be. We want to cling to our natural virtues, while all the time God is trying to get us in contact with the life of Jesus Christ— a life that can never be described in terms of natural virtues. It is the saddest thing to see people who are trying to serve God depending on that which the grace of God never gave them. They are depending solely on what they have by virtue of heredity. God does not take our natural virtues and transform them, because our natural virtues could never even come close to what Jesus Christ wants. No natural love, no natural patience, no natural purity can ever come up to His demands. But as we bring every part of our natural bodily life into harmony with the new life God has placed within us, He will exhibit in us the virtues that were characteristic of the Lord Jesus.

And every virtue we possess Is His alone.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We are only what we are in the dark; all the rest is reputation. What God looks at is what we are in the dark—the imaginations of our minds; the thoughts of our heart; the habits of our bodies; these are the things that mark us in God’s sight.  The Love of God—The Ministry of the Unnoticed, 669 L

# CCEL – 12/30/20

**Blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.**—[I COR. 1:8.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.1.html" \l "iCor.1.8)

You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.—That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.—Sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

[Col. 1:21-23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.1.html" \l "Col.1.21). -[Phi 2:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.15). [II Pet. 3:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiPet.3.html" \l "iiPet.3.14). -[Phi. 1:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html" \l "Phil.1.10).[Jude 24,25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jude.1.html" \l "Jude.1.24).

“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.” [Ecclesiastes 7:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eccl.7.html" \l "Eccl.7.8)

Look at David’s Lord and Master; see his beginning. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Would you see the end? He sits at his Father’s right hand, expecting until his enemies be made his footstool. “As he is, so are we also in this world.” You must bear the cross, or you shall never wear the crown; you must wade through the mire, or you shall never walk the golden pavement. Cheer up, then, poor Christian. “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.” See that creeping worm, how contemptible its appearance! It is the beginning of a thing. Mark that insect with gorgeous wings, playing in the sunbeams, sipping at the flower bells, full of happiness and life; that is the end thereof. That caterpillar is yourself, until you are wrapped up in the chrysalis of death; but when Christ shall appear you shall be like him, for you shall see him as he is. Be content to be like him, a worm and no man, that like him you may be satisfied when you wake up in his likeness. That rough-looking diamond is put upon the wheel of the lapidary. He cuts it on all sides. It loses much—much that seemed costly to itself. The king is crowned; the diadem is put upon the monarch’s head with trumpet’s joyful sound. A glittering ray flashes from that coronet, and it beams from that very diamond which was just now so sorely vexed by the lapidary. You may venture to compare yourself to such a diamond, for you are one of God’s people; and this is the time of the cutting process. Let faith and patience have their perfect work, for in the day when the crown shall be set upon the head of the King, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, one ray of glory shall stream from you. “They shall be mine,” saith the Lord, “in the day when I make up my jewels.” “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.”

# Word Live – 12/30/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/30/20

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# Today in the Word – 12/30/20

# Our Blessed Hope

**Read:** [**Titus 2:11–14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Titus+2%3a11%e2%80%9314)

11For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

G. K. Chesterton, English literary critic, mystery writer, and Christian apologist wrote a poem entitled “The House of Christmas.” It centers on the theme of home, the idea that Christmas contains the truth and purpose and meaning for which all human beings long. Chesterton believed that our searching brings us “home” to the stable where Christ was born: “To the end of the way of the wandering star, / To the things that cannot be and that are, / To the place where God was homeless / And all men are at home.”

We wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Titus 2:13

We have looked at the four themes of Advent seen in the Bible: hope, love, joy, and peace. Each of these is found in Christ. They’re certainly found in the Christ of the Christmas story (v. 11). He came as the living embodiment of God’s grace to offer salvation to all. Without God’s love in Christ, none of us has any hope of peace with God.

These themes should be found in our lives as followers of Christ (vv. 12, 14). “Grace teaches us”— the sense here is of training a child toward mature adulthood—to live righteously. We’re to say “no” to sin and worldliness, and “yes” to godliness and the fruit of the Spirit. The hope of salvation spurs us to love one another and to rejoice in the Lord always.

In addition, the four Advent themes will be found in the Christ who is coming again (vv. 13–14). This is where we as His people find ourselves today—between Advents. Waiting, in this case, is not a boring duty, but a joy-filled privilege or “blessed hope.” His return will bring sinful human history to a close and usher in the Millennial Kingdom— human life and the rule of God as it was meant to be experienced!

**Apply the Word**

As your thoughts turn to the coming new year, we invite you to spend some time pondering the opportunities to which you will say “yes” or “no.” Do your choices fit well into verse 12?

### **Pray with Us**

As we look back on the season of Advent, what have we learned? Almighty God, lead us through the coming months with your hope, love, joy, and peace. Show us how to reach unbelievers with your eternal, glorious truth.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/30/20

# True Success

 **Read:** [**Exodus 34:1–7**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod%2034.1%E2%80%937)

### **The New Stone Tablets**

34 The Lord said to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. 2Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. 3No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain.”

4So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. 5Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. 6And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. [Exodus 34:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod%2034.6)

My interview guest politely answered my questions. I had a feeling, though, that something lurked beneath our interaction. A passing comment brought it out.

“You’re inspiring thousands of people,” I said.

“Not thousands,” he muttered. “Millions.”

And as if pitying my ignorance, my guest reminded me of his credentials—the titles he held, the things he’d achieved, the magazine he’d graced. It was an awkward moment.

Ever since that experience, I’ve been struck by how God revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai ([Exodus 34:5–7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod%2034.5%E2%80%937)). Here was the Creator of the cosmos and Judge of humanity, but God didn’t use His titles. Here was the Maker of 100 billion galaxies, but such feats weren’t mentioned either. Instead, God introduced Himself as “the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (v. 6). When He reveals who He is, it isn’t His titles or achievements He lists but the kind of character He has.

As people made in God’s image and called to follow His example ([Genesis 1:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%201.27); [Ephesians 5:1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%205.1%E2%80%932)), this is profound. Achievement is good, titles have their place, but what really matters is how compassionate, gracious, and loving we’re becoming.

Like that interview guest, we too can base our significance on our achievements. I have. But our God has modeled what true success is—not what’s written on our business cards and resumés, but how we’re becoming like Him.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How tempted are you to base your significance on your accomplishments? What aspect of God’s character needs to grow in you today?

Spirit of God, make me compassionate, gracious, patient, and loving!

#### **Insight**

Moses was up on the mountain forty days and nights communing with God and receiving the law, which was to regulate the covenantal relationship He had with the Israelites ([Exodus 24:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod%2024.18); [31:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exodus%2031.18)). But down in the camp the people worshiped the golden calf and thereby broke the covenant. This severing was symbolized when Moses broke the two tablets containing God’s law (32:19). Moses interceded and asked Him to forgive the people for their sin and not to abandon them (vv. 31–32; 33:12–17). Although God forgave the Israelites, He also meted out discipline (32:31–35). In chapter 34, the law is reissued and the covenant renewed (v. 1). God also gave the people a self-revelation of who He is: compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, loving, faithful, forgiving, and just (vv. 6–7).

# God Calling – 12/30/20

# Fishers of Men

When you think of those of whom you read who are in anguish, do you ever think how My Heart must ache with the woe of it, with the anguish of it?

If I beheld the city and wept over it, how much more should I weep over the agony of these troubled hearts, over lives that seek to live without My sustaining Power.

"They will not come into Me that they might have Life."

Live to bring others to Me, the only Source of Happiness and Heart-Peace.

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." John 4:35

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/31/20

# 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 – 12/31/20

**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 – 12/31/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/31/20

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

# Today in the Word – 12/31/20

# A Benediction for Advent

**Read:** [**Romans 15:12–13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15%3a12%e2%80%9313)

12And again, Isaiah says,

“The Root of Jesse will spring up,  
    one who will arise to rule over the nations;  
    in him the Gentiles will hope.”[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15%3a12%e2%80%9313#fen-NIV-28316a)]

13May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Romans 15:12](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15%3a12%e2%80%9313#en-NIV-28316) Isaiah 11:10 (see Septuagint)

In the midst of personal tragedy and the American Civil War, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow penned the words to a familiar Christmas carol, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” He wrote: “And in despair, I bowed my head / ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said / For hate is strong, and mocks the song / Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.” But even in anguish, Longfellow expressed godly hope: “Then pealed the bells more loud and deep / God is not dead, nor doth He sleep / The wrong shall fail, the right prevail /With peace on earth, goodwill to men.”

May the God of hope ill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him. Romans 15:13

Whatever your circumstances this Christmas season, we trust this study has met you with the truth and encouragement of God’s Word. The reign of Christ, both present and future, is the foundation of our faith and hope (v. 12). Paul makes it clear, by referencing the Old Testament, that God’s plan of redemption has always included the Gentiles. He quotes Isaiah 11:10, demonstrating that the “Root of Jesse” is Christ, from the line of David. Paul was eager to spread the good news of Christ to the Gentiles especially (see v. 16).

Before he continued, the apostle couldn’t help but pause for a word of praise and benediction (v. 13). Paul was overflowing with hope! Biblical hope isn’t something we must create within ourselves. It’s not mere optimism or positive feelings. Rather, hope is something that God fills us with—and He’s not stingy! “Overflow” can also be translated “abound,” and one translator even renders it “brim over.” Notice that God also fills us with joy and peace. That’s three of the four Advent themes in one verse!

**Apply the Word**

One good way to conclude this study might be to review what God has taught you personally through it. Review your personal journal, study notes, or the selected Scripture passages. Write down your two or three biggest takeaways.

### **Pray with Us**

Father, thank you for the things you taught us in the year 2020. May your Word transform us and may your truth carry us in love and joy into the New Year.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/31/20

# Fireworks of Life

 **Read:** [**Ephesians 2:12–18**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%202.12%E2%80%9318)

12remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

He himself is our peace. [Ephesians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%202.14)

On New Year’s Eve, when high-powered fireworks detonate across cities and towns worldwide, the noise is loud on purpose. By their nature, say manufacturers, flashy fireworks are meant to split the atmosphere, literally. “Repeater” blasts can sound the loudest, especially when exploded near the ground.

Troubles, too, can boom through our hearts, minds, and homes. The “fireworks” of life—family struggles, relationship problems, work challenges, financial strain, even church division—can feel like explosions, rattling our emotional atmosphere.

Yet we know the One who lifts us over this uproar. Christ Himself “is our peace,” Paul wrote in [Ephesians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%202.14). When we abide in His presence, His peace is greater than any disruption, quieting the noise of any worry, hurt, or disunity.

This would have been powerful assurance to Jews and gentiles alike. They’d once lived “without hope and without God in the world” (v. 12). Now they faced threats of persecution and internal threats of division. But in Christ, they’d been brought near to Him, and consequently to each other, by His blood. “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (v. 14).

As we start a new year, with threats of unrest and division ever rumbling on the horizon, let’s turn from life’s noisy trials to seek our ever-present Peace. He quiets the booms, healing us.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What “fireworks” are shattering the calm in your life? When you give them to God in prayer, what peace do you feel?

Comforting God, when life’s fireworks shock and unsettle me, draw me to Your peace.

#### **Insight**

The process of bringing people into the family of God is the work of all three persons of the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The book of Ephesians begins with high praises to God, “who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (1:3) and has sealed believers in Jesus with the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14). The work of Jesus is featured in chapter 2. Ironically, His violent death on the cross is the means through which Jews and gentiles are reconciled and all of sinful humanity can be at peace with God: “Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (v. 13). Note also that the mission of the Son includes bringing us to the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit: “For through him we . . . have access to the Father by one Spirit” (v. 18).

# God Calling – 12/31/20

# 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 – 1/1/21

# 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 – 1/1/21

**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 – 1/1/21

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

# Scripture Union – 1/1/21

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

# Today in the Word – 1/1/21

# https://www.todayintheword.org/siteassets/header-images/2021/01/titw_january_desktop_1200x400.jpg A New Start

**Read:** [**2 Corinthians 5:1–10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3a1%e2%80%9310)

### **Awaiting the New Body**

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, 3because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

6Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7For we live by faith, not by sight. 8We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Years ago, I led skiing and backpacking trips with college students near the Canadian border. We pitched our tents in the snow and spent the short days and long nights enjoying God’s presence in a winter wonderland. As peaceful as it was, it was also quite challenging. By the end of the trip, we were all ready to eat a warm meal, take a hot shower, and put on dry clothes. Camping in the sub-freezing wilderness was manageable for a time, but eventually, we yearned for the comforts of home.

Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God. 2 Corinthians 5:5

In 2 Corinthians, Paul paints a picture of the glorious home that is waiting for all who believe: our heavenly dwelling. Fourteen years before Paul penned this letter, he “was caught up” with Christ into Paradise (2 Cor. 12:2–4). And in our text today, he gives the Corinthians a glimpse of what he experienced in the midst of the present reality (5:1-4). First, Paul acknowledges the suffering, groaning, and brokenness that exists in our world (vv. 2, 4). He does not deny it, overlook it, or explain it away. Rather he embraces the fallenness of humanity and recognizes that God has something much better in store for us (v. 1).

This past year stretched and challenged us. It taught us a lot about ourselves, one another, and God. It also displayed, perhaps more clearly than ever, the depravity of our world and the utter need for the ultimate healer, rescuer, and peacemaker: our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not guaranteed that this year will be easier, but we can rest assured that He has made us “for this very purpose” (v. 5). What awaits is something brand new and He will be with us all the way home.

**Apply the Word**

The New Year offers each of us a fresh new start. Probably more than ever, you are longing for something new. Allow the Lord to show you which areas of your life need a new beginning and choose to begin each day in His Word.

## BY Chris Rappazini

# Our Daily Bread – 1/1/21

# Uncharted Waters

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

### **Israel’s Only Savior**

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

#### **Footnotes:**

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

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

The ball drops in New York’s Times Square. The crowd counts down to Big Ben chiming. Sydney Harbor erupts in fireworks. However your city marks it, there’s something exciting about welcoming in a new year and the fresh start it brings. On New Year’s Day we push out into new waters. What friendships and opportunities might we find?

For all its excitement, though, a new year can be unsettling. None of us knows the future or what storms it may hold. Many New Year’s traditions reflect this: Fireworks were invented in China to supposedly ward off evil spirits and make a new season prosperous. And New Year’s resolutions date back to the Babylonians who made vows to appease their gods. Such acts were an attempt to make an unknown future secure.

When they weren’t making vows, the Babylonians were busy conquering people—including Israel. In time, God sent the enslaved Jews this message: “Do not fear . . . . When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” ([Isaiah 43:1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2043.1%E2%80%932)). Later, Jesus said something similar when He and the disciples were caught sailing in a violent storm. “Why are you so afraid?” He told them before commanding the waters to be still ([Matthew 8:23–27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%208.23%E2%80%9327)).

Today we push out from the shore into new, uncharted waters. Whatever we face, He’s with us—and He has the power to calm the waves.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What possibilities excite you as you look forward to a new year? What worries can you place in God’s hands?

God, thank You that whatever this new year brings, You will be with me in it.

#### **Insight**

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out that the phrase “but now” (or “and now”), which launches [Isaiah 43:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2043.1), is a repeating feature of this section of Isaiah’s prophecy. It’s also found in 44:1; 49:5; and 52:5. In a section that boldly promises God’s rescue of the people of Israel, the phrase “but now” sets God’s promised rescue in contrast to the discipline He’s brought upon His people because of their chronic waywardness (see [Isaiah 42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2042)). The vital thing to remember, however, is that God’s acts of correction and rescue are both expressions of His love for His people. Though they’d rejected His love, He loved them to the point of disciplining them for their wrongful actions. Then He loved them enough to bring them home.

# God Calling – 1/1/21

# 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 – 1/2/21

# 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 – 1/2/21

**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 – 1/2/21

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

# Scripture Union – 1/2/21

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

# Today in the Word – 1/2/21

# A New You

**Read:** [**2 Corinthians 5:11–21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3a11%e2%80%9321)

### **The Ministry of Reconciliation**

11Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. 12We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. 13If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

16So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3a11%e2%80%9321" \l "fen-NIV-28895a" \o "See footnote a)] The old has gone, the new is here! 18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21God made him who had no sin to be sin[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3a11%e2%80%9321#fen-NIV-28899b)] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Corinthians 5:17](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3a11%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-28895) Or Christ, that person is a new creation.
2. [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3a11%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-28899) Or be a sin offering

American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, “It’s never too late, or in my case too early, to be whoever you want to be...and if you find that you’re not, I hope you have the courage to start over again.” Over the past year, our lives have changed in countless ways. We learned to shop differently, socialize differently, and travel differently. We were forced to try new technology and create new routines. While starting something new can be scary it can also be sacred, especially when we allow God to create something new in us.

The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Our text today reminds us that if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation (v. 17). Notice Paul uses the word, anyone. The city of Corinth was a large trading post with people coming and going from various nations and cultures. However, Paul wants his readers to know that regardless of where each individual came from, everyone is welcome to be “in Christ” (v. 17). When we are “in Christ,” we are transformed into a new creation. Paul wants his readers to know that followers of Jesus are not just forgiven of their sins; they are made into someone completely new. Did you know that the moment you put your trust in Christ, you became a new person with a new purpose and a new future?

“What is my new purpose?” you may be asking. Paul says it is to be an ambassador of Christ (v. 20). You are to represent Him with your life. However, being a new creation and His ambassador doesn’t mean that we are perfect. Rather, it means we have been changed and we continue to be changed. Through the power of God alone, you are continually being made into a new you.

**Apply the Word**

This New Year can give you a new start. Begin by submitting your old life to God and become someone new. Commit to being in His Word daily as a new creation and new ambassador for Christ.

## BY Chris Rappazini

# Our Daily Bread – 1/2/21

# When the Floods Come

 **Read:** [**Luke 6:46–49**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.46%E2%80%9349)

### **The Wise and Foolish Builders**

46“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? 47As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. 48They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

The one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. [Luke 6:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.49)

I live in Colorado, a state in the western US known for the Rocky Mountains and our annual snowfall. Yet the worst natural disaster in my state had nothing to do with snow, but rain. The Big Thompson flood occurred on July 31, 1976, around the resort town of Estes Park. When the water finally receded, the death toll was 144 lives, not including livestock. In the wake of that disaster significant studies were done in the area, especially in regard to the foundation of roads and highways. The walls of the roads that withstood the storm were those filled with concrete. In other words, they had a sure and strong foundation.

In our lives the question is not if the floods will come, but when. Sometimes we have advance notice, but usually not. Jesus stresses a strong foundation for such times—one built by not just hearing His words but also by living out the gospel ([Luke 6:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.47)). That practice is almost like pouring concrete into our lives. When the floods come, and they will, we can withstand them because we’ve been “well built” (v. 48). The absence of practice leaves our lives vulnerable to collapse and destruction (v. 49). It’s the difference between being wise and foolish.

It’s good to pause occasionally and do a little foundation assessment. Jesus will help us to fortify the weak places that we might stand strong in His power when the floods come.

By:  [John Blase](https://odb.org/author/johnblase/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What weak spots need attention in your life? How might you work on them?

Jesus, I want to be not just a hearer but a doer as well. Give me the vision to see weak places in my foundation that need attention. And thank You for Your promised presence when the floods do come.

#### **Insight**

[Luke 6:17–49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.17%E2%80%9349) echoes the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5–7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%205%E2%80%937)), but it’s actually a separate discourse Jesus gave “on a level place” ([Luke 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.17)). [Luke 6:46–49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.46%E2%80%9349) mirrors [Matthew 7:21–27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%207.21%E2%80%9327), and—similar to that passage—it contains a dire warning: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” ([Luke 6:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.46)). The Matthew passage is even stronger: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven” ([Matthew 7:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%207.21)). Christ’s message is clear: If we profess to love Him, we’ll listen to and follow His commands. A quick overview of His commands is found in [Luke 6:27–36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.27%E2%80%9336): love those who hate you; be merciful; do not judge; forgive lavishly; give generously. The one who does these things is building a foundation on rock (v. 48).

# God Calling – 1/2/21

# 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 – 1/3/21

# 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 – 1/3/21

**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 – 1/3/21

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

# Scripture Union – 1/3/21

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

# Today in the Word – 1/3/21

# A New Way to Live

**Read:** [**John 15:9–17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15%3a9%e2%80%9317)

9“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command. 15I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17This is my command: Love each other.

At Christmas, our young children love to unwrap presents. To say they are excited to discover what is inside the colorful packages would be a huge understatement. It is almost as if these new clothes will give them a brand-new identity and their new toys will launch them on an exciting new journey. Of course, as parents, we know that their initial delight at these new possessions will eventually fade. In contrast, the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ is something extraordinary that will never wear out or fade away. When we believe in Jesus as our Savior, we begin a new journey with a new purpose. And, Jesus gives us a new way to live. Hours before he died, Jesus Christ gave his closest followers a new command: “Love each other” (v. 12). As easy as that may sound, Jesus knew this would be extremely difficult for His disciples and for us.

Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12

Living and loving as Christ loved us will ultimately bring delight and joy to our heavenly Father and have a transforming effect on us as well. In verse 11, Jesus reveals that as we love Him, His joy will take root in our lives. Joy is not the same as mere happiness or excitement, but rather a deep satisfaction that comes from being in step with God and His perfect will. Thankfully, we are given Christ’s life as an example (vv. 12–13). Just as He surrendered His life, we are to lay down our lives for Him.

Jesus also gave His disciples a new title. They were no longer referred to as servants, but as friends (vv. 14–16). This distinction was given because Jesus wanted them to understand that their lives were to be lived for God  and for one another. Christ gave them, and us, a new way to live which is centered around loving one another (v. 17).

**Apply the Word**

Starting something new can be intimidating. But with Christ as our guide, the new journey is worth it. Make it a point to start each day this week with us, as we grow in living new lives for Jesus.

## BY Chris Rappazini

# Our Daily Bread – 1/3/21

# Moving at the Speed of Jesus

 **Read:** [**John 11:14–27**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2011.14%E2%80%9327)

14So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

16Then Thomas (also known as Didymus[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3A14%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26540a)]) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

### **Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus**

17On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18Now Bethany was less than two miles[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3A14%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26542b)] from Jerusalem, 19and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

23Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

25Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 11:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3A14%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-26540) Thomas (Aramaic) and Didymus (Greek) both mean twin.
2. [John 11:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3A14%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-26542) Or about 3 kilometers

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” [John 11:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2011.21)

Recently, my car needed work. The mechanic’s shop was close, a mile from my home. So I decided to just walk home. But as I shuffled along next to a bustling thoroughfare, I noticed something: Everyone else was moving so fast.

This isn’t rocket science. Cars go faster than pedestrians. Zip, zip, zip! As I ambled home, I had a realization: We’re so used to moving fast. All the time. Then, another realization: I often expect God to move just as quickly. I want His plans to fit my speedy timetable.

When Jesus lived on earth, His seemingly slow pace sometimes disappointed His friends. In [John 11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2011), Mary and Martha sent word that their brother, Lazarus, was sick. They knew Jesus could help (vv. 1–3). But He arrived some four days later (v. 17), after Lazarus had died. “ ‘Lord,’ Martha said to Jesus, ‘if you had been here, my brother would not have died’ ” (v. 21). Translation: Jesus didn’t move fast enough. But He had bigger plans: raising Lazarus from the dead (vv. 38–44).

Can you relate to Martha’s desperation? I can. Sometimes, I long for Jesus to move more quickly to answer a prayer. Sometimes, it seems like He’s late. But Jesus’ sovereign schedule is different from ours. He accomplishes His saving work on His timetable, not ours. And the ultimate outcome displays His glory and goodness in ways that are so much greater than our plans.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When have you been disappointed that Jesus seemingly didn’t answer a prayer, only to realize He was accomplishing something bigger? How did that realization affect your perception of God and His sovereignty?

Father, sometimes I get so impatient. Help me to trust in Your perfect timing and to cling to Your goodness in faith.

To learn more about the life of Christ, visit [ChristianUniversity.org/NT111.](https://ChristianUniversity.org/NT111.)

#### **Insight**

When confronted with the death of those we love, we’re often tempted to either deny how painful it is or to live without hope, only seeing the grief. In [John 11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2011), Jesus holds together both the horror of death and the sure promise of life. Because death is a tragic distortion of God’s good creation, Jesus as “the resurrection and the life” (v. 25) represents the restoration to life. If we read the whole story of Lazarus’ resurrection, we see a fuller picture of how Christ responds to death and grief. He’s “deeply moved in spirit and troubled,” and He weeps (vv. 33–35). Seeing death in all its horror, He triumphantly overcomes it and raises Lazarus to life. Jesus’ command, “Lazarus, come out!” (v. 43) points to the hope of our own bodily resurrection.

# God Calling – 1/3/21

# 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 – 1/4/21

# 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 – 1/4/21

**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 – 1/4/21

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

# Scripture Union – 1/4/21

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

# Today in the Word – 1/4/21

# A New Way to Love

**Read:** [**John 13:1–17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1%e2%80%9317)

### **Jesus Washes His Disciples’ Feet**

13 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

7Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

8“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

9“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

10Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” 11For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

12When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. 15I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Imagine you have been invited to a meal at a table, but not just any table. You are a guest at the table where Jesus and His friends gathered for the Passover Feast. You anxiously wait for the festivities to begin when you notice Jesus stand, get a towel and water, and begin washing everyone’s feet. Traditionally, this was a job done by a servant, not the master. At the very least, it should be your job. He shouldn’t be washing your feet! But with this simple act, Jesus taught His disciples, as well as you and me, that being a disciple means getting into the foot-washing business. Christ gives us a new way to live by showing us a new way to love.

He now showed them the full extent of his love. John 13:1

One interesting thing to note is the timing of Jesus’ act of service. Jesus knew His death was quickly approaching. He knew the pain, torture, mockery, and betrayal He would endure. Nevertheless, He used this opportunity to teach His disciples to love one another through selfless service.

John uses verse one as a catalyst for the remainder of his book. The washing of the disciples’ feet was the first of many ways Jesus would display the full extent of His love (v. 1) in his waning hours. His selfless act of serving others, in particular those who had nothing to give back in return, gives us an example to live by (v. 15). He demonstrates a new way to love: selflessly, serving those in our circle of influence. It is impossible to say what you or I would do if we had sat at that table many years ago, but today we are called to show others the kind of love that Jesus showed His friends.

**Apply the Word**

You and I are called to show a new kind of love. Who is at your "table" that you can serve with love today? How can you show Christ's love to someone else?

## BY Chris Rappazini

# Our Daily Bread – 1/4/21

# A Lifestyle of Worship

 **Read:** [**Psalm 100**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20100)

#### **A psalm. For giving grateful praise.**

1Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.  
2    Worship the Lord with gladness;  
    come before him with joyful songs.  
3Know that the Lord is God.  
    It is he who made us, and we are his[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+100&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15512a)];  
    we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
    and his courts with praise;  
    give thanks to him and praise his name.  
5For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;  
    his faithfulness continues through all generations.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Psalm 100:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+100&version=NIV#en-NIV-15512) Or and not we ourselves

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. [Psalm 100:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20100.2)

As I waited in the breakfast buffet line at a Christian conference center, a group of women entered the dining hall. I smiled, saying hello to a woman who stepped into the line behind me. Returning my greeting, she said, “I know you.” We scooped scrambled eggs onto our plates and tried to figure out where we’d met. But I was pretty sure she’d mistaken me for someone else.

When we returned for lunch, the woman approached me. “Do you drive a white car?”

I shrugged. “I used to. A few years ago.”

She laughed. “We stopped at the same traffic light by the elementary school almost every morning,” she said. “You’d always be lifting your hands, singing joyfully. I thought you were worshiping God. That made me want to join in, even on tough days.”

Praising God, we prayed together, hugged, and enjoyed lunch.

My new friend affirmed that people notice how Jesus’ followers behave, even when we think no one is watching. As we embrace a lifestyle of joyful worship, we can come before our Creator anytime and anywhere. Acknowledging His enduring love and faithfulness, we can enjoy intimate communion with Him and thank Him for His ongoing care ([Psalm 100](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20100)). Whether we’re singing praises in our cars, praying in public, or spreading God’s love through kind acts, we can inspire others to “praise his name” (v. 4). Worshiping God is more than a Sunday morning event.

By:  [Xochitl Dixon](https://odb.org/author/xochitldixon/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

In what ways can you joyfully worship God throughout the day? When has someone else's worship led to your own?

Almighty God, please help me live to worship You with contagious joy and gratitude.

#### **Insight**

While worship of God may include joyful praise and thanksgiving, as [Psalm 100](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20100) describes, the biblical concept of worship is much broader. The Hebrew word translated “worship” (‘bd) in [Psalm 100:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20100.2) is more often translated “serve” or “work.” For example, Adam was to “work” (same Hebrew word) the ground in the garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%202.15)). Later this word became associated with the “service” of God in the tabernacle and temple (see [Numbers 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num%203.7)). Because tabernacle and temple service involved praise of God, offering sacrifices, and other religious practices, the word came to mean “worship” as we understand it today. But the concept really has to do with serving God more than singing praises and offering thanksgiving. These expressions of worship are just some ways we can serve God. As Paul says, believers are to offer their whole bodies and minds to God as an act of spiritual worship ([Romans 12:1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2012.1%E2%80%932)).

# God Calling – 1/4/21

# 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