# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/2/19

# The Conditions of Discipleship



If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also….And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me….So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. —[Luke 14:26-27, 33](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+14%3A26-27%2C+33)

If the closest relationships of a disciple’s life conflict with the claims of Jesus Christ, then our Lord requires instant obedience to Himself. Discipleship means personal, passionate devotion to a Person— our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a vast difference between devotion to a person and devotion to principles or to a cause. Our Lord never proclaimed a cause— He proclaimed personal devotion to Himself. To be a disciple is to be a devoted bondservant motivated by love for the Lord Jesus. Many of us who call ourselves Christians are not truly devoted to Jesus Christ. No one on earth has this passionate love for the Lord Jesus unless the Holy Spirit has given it to him. We may admire, respect, and revere Him, but we cannot love Him on our own. The only One who truly loves the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit, and it is He who has “poured out in our hearts” the very “love of God” ([Romans 5:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5:5)). Whenever the Holy Spirit sees an opportunity to glorify Jesus through you, He will take your entire being and set you ablaze with glowing devotion to Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is a life characterized by true and spontaneous creativity. Consequently, a disciple is subject to the same charge that was leveled against Jesus Christ, namely, the charge of inconsistency. But Jesus Christ was always consistent in His relationship to God, and a Christian must be consistent in his relationship to the life of the Son of God in him, not consistent to strict, unyielding doctrines. People pour themselves into their own doctrines, and God has to blast them out of their preconceived ideas before they can become devoted to Jesus Christ.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 7/2/19

This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof.—[EXO. 12:43.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.12.html" \l "Exod.12.43)

We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.—Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.—At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, . . . having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

[Heb. 13:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.10). -[John 3:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.3.html" \l "John.3.3). -[Eph. 2:12,13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.12).[Eph. 2:14,15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.14).[Eph. 2:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.19).[Rev. 3:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.3.html" \l "Rev.3.20).

“Our heart shall rejoice in Him.” **[Psalm 33:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.33.html" \l "Ps.33.21)**

Blessed is the fact that Christians can rejoice even in the deepest distress; although trouble may surround them, they still sing; and, like many birds, they sing best in their cages. The waves may roll over them, but their souls soon rise to the surface and see the light of God’s countenance; they have a buoyancy about them which keeps their head always above the water, and helps them to sing amid the tempest, “God is with me still.” To whom shall the glory be given? Oh! to Jesus—it is all by Jesus. Trouble does not necessarily bring consolation with it to the believer, but the presence of the Son of God in the fiery furnace with him fills his heart with joy. He is sick and suffering, but Jesus visits him and makes his bed for him. He is dying, and the cold chilly waters of Jordan are gathering about him up to the neck, but Jesus puts His arms around him, and cries, “Fear not, beloved; to die is to be blessed; the waters of death have their fountain-head in heaven; they are not bitter, they are sweet as nectar, for they flow from the throne of God.” As the departing saint wades through the stream, and the billows gather around him, and heart and flesh fail him, the same voice sounds in his ears, “Fear not; I am with thee; be not dismayed; I am thy God.” As he nears the borders of the infinite unknown, and is almost affrighted to enter the realm of shades, Jesus says, “Fear not, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Thus strengthened and consoled, the believer is not afraid to die; nay, he is even willing to depart, for since he has seen Jesus as the morning star, he longs to gaze upon Him as the sun in his strength. Truly, the presence of Jesus is all the heaven we desire. He is at once

“The glory of our brightest days;

The comfort of our nights.”

# Word Live – 7/2/19

# What motivates obedience?

## Prepare

Have you ever resolved to do something specific, but then failed to follow through? Is there something wrong with our willpower?



## Bible passage: Deuteronomy 11:1–32

##### Love and Obey the LORD

1 Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always. 2 Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the LORD your God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm; 3 the signs he performed and the things he did in the heart of Egypt, both to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his whole country; 4 what he did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and chariots, how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the Red Sea as they were pursuing you, and how the LORD brought lasting ruin on them. 5 It was not your children who saw what he did for you in the desert until you arrived at this place, 6 and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab the Reubenite, when the earth opened its mouth right in the middle of all Israel and swallowed them up with their households, their tents and every living thing that belonged to them. 7 But it was your own eyes that saw all these great things the LORD has done.

8 Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 9 and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your forefathers to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10 The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. 11 But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. 12 It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

13 So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul- 14 then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. 15 I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

16 Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. 17 Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving you. 18 Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 19 Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 20 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, 21 so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

22 If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him- 23 then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. 24 Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. 25 No man will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.

26 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse- 27 the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; 28 the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. 29 When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. 30 As you know, these mountains are across the Jordan, west of the road, toward the setting sun, near the great trees of Moreh, in the territory of those Canaanites living in the Arabah in the vicinity of Gilgal. 31 You are about to cross the Jordan to enter and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you. When you have taken it over and are living there, 32 be sure that you obey all the decrees and laws I am setting before you today.

## Explore

**Right response**

The nation of Israel needed to be faithful to God in order to be blessed in the Promised Land. But what could motivate this needed faithfulness? Moses begins by reminding them that God had been at work to educate them in Egypt and in the wilderness (vs 1–7). Having seen God at work in their lives, the right response was not simply obedience, but love resulting in obedience.

**Blessing in our lives**

As they entered the land they would discover that God’s goodness was at work every day in caring for the land (see vs 11,12). God would continue to bless and provide for the nation as they continued to respond to him with love and faithfulness. Again, they had a formal arrangement where obedience led to blessing. Although we do not live under those terms, obedience will generally lead to blessing in our lives too.

**Stirring love in us**

Like Israel, we can look back and see God’s good deeds in the past, and in our own history. We can also open our eyes to see God’s present kindness to us. God’s goodness does not simply impose a requirement of obedience on us, it is designed to stir love in us that will fuel that obedience.

[Peter Mead](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

If your willpower is not strong enough to keep a New Year’s resolution, don’t trust it to maintain obedience to God. Instead, remember God’s work in the past, review his care in the present, and let love for him drive your obedience.

## Deeper Bible study

While making the promise (vs 9,21) and keeping the promise (vs 17,23a,29,31) are done by God, taking possession of the Promised Land is something Israel must do (vs 8,11,29b,31a). The land ‘flowing with milk and honey’ (v 9) is Israel’s inheritance, but successful occupation of the land – as well as enjoyment of its abundance – is contingent upon a right response to this gift. Throughout Deuteronomy, the divine confirmation that God is ‘giving’ the land and the divine command to Israel to ‘take possession’ of it go hand in hand ([Deut 3:18; 4:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut+3%3A18%3B+4%3A1&version=NIV" \t "_blank)).

If Israel fails fully and faithfully to ‘take possession’ of the land, her inheritance will lie fallow and, ultimately, she risks losing it. Several factors threaten to jeopardise possession. Externally, there are those ‘larger and stronger’ pagan nations, who must be dispossessed (v 23) and from whom a stringent separation must be maintained or God’s people will be exposed to the snare of syncretism (v 16). In the land, Israel must live in careful obedience and humble dependence on God. In Egypt, fruitfulness depended on human effort (v 10); they must now learn to trust in God’s provision (vs 11–15).

We, too, have an inheritance from our Father. Our salvation is neither earned nor merited, but a gift from God; nevertheless, salvation becomes effective only when we take hold of it by faith ([Rom 3:23–25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+3%3A23%E2%80%9325&version=NIV)), just as Israel had to lay hold of the land. Salvation is about new birth, but also a new life of holiness. Sanctification is a cooperative effort: the Spirit partners with us to the extent of our assent. Paul captures the tension of God’s grace and our responsibility: ‘continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.’ ([Phil 2:12,13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Phil+2%3A12%2C13&version=NIV))

How much of you does the Holy Spirit possess?

[Tanya Ferdinandusz](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/E-F/3526095.id)

## Blessings and curses today

**A concept still valid for us?**

The whole concept of curses having any reality is abhorrent to Western thinking with its distrust of the supernatural. But in many cultures of the world curses are a fact of life. And in the Bible both blessings and curses are taken very seriously.  
  
**Covenant curses**

Much of the latter chapters of Deuteronomy are taken up with what we may call ‘covenant curses’. ‘As God’s appropriate response to disobedience, the curse threatens to deprive covenant violators of security, freedom, health and blessings.’ 1 The ultimate curse – exile – involved the removal of the one thing that made Israel distinctive: the divine presence. Spiritually, God’s people are redeemed when Jesus takes upon himself ‘the curse of the law’ ([Galatians 3:13,14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%203:13,14&version=72)).  
  
**Covenant blessings**

As early as God’s call of Abraham, we see that blessing is closely tied to the experience of covenant ([Genesis 12:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2012:3;&version=72;)). For the covenant community, blessing is frequently conditional, in some sense a reward for obedience, though no merit is involved. Even in the New Testament, the earthly blessing of a good and long life is promised to those who honour their parents ([Ephesians 6:1–3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206:1–3;&version=72;)). But generally speaking, in the Gospel era, it is spiritual blessings laid up in heaven that are of key importance. Jesus teaches his disciples to regard those as blessed, to be envied and congratulated, who are pure in heart, even if they miss out on pleasure, riches and success in this life ([Matthew 5:3–12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%205:3–12;&version=72;)).  
  
1L Ryken, Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, IVP, 1998

## A poem about God’s provision

A poem to help us reflect on God’s provision – not just to the Israelites in the wilderness, but to us.  
  
**Milk and honey**  
When we were slaves in Egypt  
Each drop of water was dragged from the river  
And each crumb of bread scratched from the sand.  
When we travelled in the desert  
Water gushed from the rock  
And bread dropped each day from God’s own hand.  
But now we stand  
At the edge of our Promised Land,  
Knowing that more than bread and water God has planned.  
  
Milk –  
Nourishing us from the first  
When as babies we are nursed,  
Building bones and making strong,  
Cooling throats and quenching thirst –  
Adding richness to life’s song.  
  
Honey –  
Golden liquid, thick and clear,  
Luxury when all is drear  
Giving joy upon the tongue,  
Lifting spirits, bringing cheer –  
Adding sweetness to life’s song.   
  
Praise the Lord for bread and water,  
All our bodies need to live.  
And thank him for each generous treat –  
Milk and honey, rich and sweet.  
  
What for you is milk and honey  
From the Lord who loves to give?  
  
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# Today in the Word – 7/2/19

# Waiting for God

**Read:** [**Zechariah 1:7–17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+1%3a7%e2%80%9317)

### The Man Among the Myrtle Trees

7On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo.

8During the night I had a vision, and there before me was a man mounted on a red horse. He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses.

9I asked, “What are these, my lord?”

The angel who was talking with me answered, “I will show you what they are.”

10Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, “They are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth.”

11And they reported to the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees, “We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace.”

12Then the angel of the Lord said, “Lord Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?” 13So the Lord spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me.

14Then the angel who was speaking to me said, “Proclaim this word: This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, 15and I am very angry with the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry, but they went too far with the punishment.’

16“Therefore this is what the Lord says: ‘I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt. And the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem,’ declares the Lord Almighty.

17“Proclaim further: This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.’”

Does it seem like you are always waiting in line? It may not be your imagination. Some studies report that the average person spends about two years of their life waiting in line. Delays can make us feel anxious or even angry, especially when we are waiting for God.

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? Psalm 13:1

Waiting is also the theme of the vision described in today’s passage. This is the first of eight visions which comprise almost half the book. The visions came to Zechariah during the night (v. 8). The Bible does not call them dreams even though the prophet may have been asleep. Zechariah’s inaugural vision was of a “man” on a red horse standing among myrtle trees in a ravine with three other groups of horses. According to verse 11, this “man” was the “angel of the LORD,” a figure many scholars consider to be the pre-incarnate Christ. Although the text does not say that the other horses had riders, the explanation of their mission suggests that they were mounted. Verse 9 also indicates there was another angel who interpreted the vision for Zechariah.

After being sent throughout the earth, the riders return and report that they found “the whole world at rest and in peace” (v. 11). To most people these words might sound like good news, but they meant that those who oppressed God’s people did so unchecked.

The cry of the angel of the Lord in verse 12 is often echoed in the Psalms. More than a question, it is an appeal to God for deliverance. The Lord responded with words of assurance and comfort. Although God had used the nations to discipline His people, they too would be held accountable for their sin (v. 15). Jerusalem would be restored (v. 17).

### Apply the Word

We often wait for others because they are not perfect. A clerk, for example, is able to deal only with one person at a time. Our doctor may be uncertain of the right diagnosis. Waiting for God, however, is usually a matter of timing. God has not forgotten you. When the time is right, He will act according to His perfect plan.

### Pray with Us

As we pray for Moody’s president, Dr. Mark Jobe, we ask God to keep sharpening his spiritual focus for the future of Moody and show him the best course for our three main areas of ministry: education, radio, and publishing.

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/2/19

# How to Find Peace

**Read:** [**Colossians 3:12–17**](https://www.odb.org/2019/07/02/the-rule-of-peace/)

12Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

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

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. [Colossians 3:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A15)

“What do you think about peace?” my friend asked as we ate lunch together. “Peace?” I said, puzzled. “I’m not sure—why do you ask?” He answered, “Well, as you jiggled your foot during the church service I wondered if you’re agitated about something. Have you considered the peace God gives to those who love Him?”

That day some years ago, I was a bit hurt by my friend’s question, but it started me on a journey. I began exploring the Bible to see how God’s people embraced this gift of well-being, of peace, even in the midst of hardship. As I read Paul’s letter to the Colossians, I chewed over the apostle’s command to let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts (Colossians 3:15).

Paul was writing to a church he’d never visited but had heard about from his friend Epaphras. He was concerned that as they encountered false teaching, they were losing the peace of Christ. But instead of admonishing them, Paul encouraged them to trust Jesus, who would give them assurance and hope (v. 15).

We all will encounter times when we can choose to embrace or refuse the rule of Christ’s peace in our hearts. As we turn to Him, asking Jesus to dwell in us, He will gently release us from the anxiety and cares that weigh us down. As we seek His peace, we trust that He will meet us with His love.

By [Amy Boucher Pye](https://odb.org/author/amyboucherpye/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What situations or relationships weigh on your mind and heart? How can you ask Jesus to bring you His peace?

Jesus, You give peace that passes all understanding. Help me embrace Your peace in every area of my life.

#### Insight

Paul’s letter to the Colossians was one of four letters he wrote while being held as a prisoner in Rome. These four letters, commonly called the “Prison Epistles,” consist of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. The church letters went to three different destinations in two different regions of the ancient world. Philippians was directed to the church at Philippi, a city in Macedonia (ancient northern Greece), while Ephesians and Colossians were written to two cities (Ephesus, Colossae) in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The personal letter to Philemon was also delivered to Colossae, where Philemon is believed to have lived, being actively involved in the church there. These letters were probably intended to be circular letters that were read and passed along to other churches.

# God Calling – 7/2/19

# The Child-Spirit

Does the way seem a stony one?  Not one stone can impede your progress. Courage.  Face the future, but face it only with a brave and happy heart.  Do not seek to see it.  YOU are robbing Faith of her sublime sweetness if you do this.

Just know that all is well and that Faith, not seeing, but believing, is the barque that will bear you to safety, over the stormy waters. "According to your faith be it unto you" was My injunction to those who sought healing of Me.

If for wonder-working, if for healing, if for salvation faith was so necessary then the reason is clear why I urged that all who sought entrance to My Kingdom must become as little children.  Faith is the child-attitude.

Seek in every way to become child-like. Seek, seek, seek until you find, until the years have added to your nature that of the trusting child.  Not only for its simple trust must you copy the child-spirit, but for its joy in life, it's ready laughter, its lack of criticism, its desire to share all with all men.  Ask much that you may become as little children, friendly and loving towards all -- not critical, not fearful.

"Except ye...become as little children ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

And Jesus called a little child unto him...And said... Except  ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.  Matthew 18:2,3

# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/3/19

# The Concentration of Personal Sin



Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips… —[Isaiah 6:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Isaiah+6%3A5)

When I come into the very presence of God, I do not realize that I am a sinner in an indefinite sense, but I suddenly realize and the focus of my attention is directed toward the concentration of sin in a particular area of my life. A person will easily say, “Oh yes, I know I am a sinner,” but when he comes into the presence of God he cannot get away with such a broad and indefinite statement. Our conviction is focused on our specific sin, and we realize, as Isaiah did, what we really are. This is always the sign that a person is in the presence of God. There is never any vague sense of sin, but a focusing on the concentration of sin in some specific, personal area of life. God begins by convicting us of the very thing to which His Spirit has directed our mind’s attention. If we will surrender, submitting to His conviction of that particular sin, He will lead us down to where He can reveal the vast underlying nature of sin. That is the way God always deals with us when we are consciously aware of His presence.

This experience of our attention being directed to our concentration of personal sin is true in everyone’s life, from the greatest of saints to the worst of sinners. When a person first begins climbing the ladder of experience, he might say, “I don’t know where I’ve gone wrong,” but the Spirit of God will point out some definite and specific thing to him. The effect of Isaiah’s vision of the holiness of the Lord was the directing of his attention to the fact that he was “a man of unclean lips.” “He touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged’ ” ([Isaiah 6:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+6:7)). The cleansing fire had to be applied where the sin had been concentrated.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The main characteristic which is the proof of the indwelling Spirit is an amazing tenderness in personal dealing, and a blazing truthfulness with regard to God’s Word. Disciples Indeed, 386 R

# CCEL – 7/3/19

If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.—[ROM. 8:17.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.17)

If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.—Thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.—Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.

He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him I will give power over the nations.—To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

[Gal. 3:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.3.html" \l "Gal.3.29).[I John 3:l](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.3.html" \l "iJohn.3.1). -[Gal. 4:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.4.html" \l "Gal.4.7). -[Eph. 1:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.5).[John 17:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.24).[Rev. 2:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.2.html" \l "Rev.2.26). -[Rev. 3:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.3.html" \l "Rev.3.21).

“The ill favoured and leanfleshed cows did eat up the seven wellfavoured and fat cows.”

**[Genesis 41:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.41.html" \l "Gen.41.4)**

Pharaoh’s dream has too often been my waking experience. My days of sloth have ruinously destroyed all that I had achieved in times of zealous industry; my seasons of coldness have frozen all the genial glow of my periods of fervency and enthusiasm; and my fits of worldliness have thrown me back from my advances in the divine life. I had need to beware of lean prayers, lean praises, lean duties, and lean experiences, for these will eat up the fat of my comfort and peace. If I neglect prayer for never so short a time, I lose all the spirituality to which I had attained; if I draw no fresh supplies from heaven, the old corn in my granary is soon consumed by the famine which rages in my soul. When the caterpillars of indifference, the cankerworms of worldliness, and the palmerworms of self-indulgence, lay my heart completely desolate, and make my soul to languish, all my former fruitfulness and growth in grace avails me nothing whatever. How anxious should I be to have no lean-fleshed days, no ill-favoured hours! If every day I journeyed towards the goal of my desires I should soon reach it, but backsliding leaves me still far off from the prize of my high calling, and robs me of the advances which I had so laboriously made. The only way in which all my days can be as the “fat cows,” is to feed them in the right meadow, to spend them with the Lord, in His service, in His company, in His fear, and in His way. Why should not every year be richer than the past, in love, and usefulness, and joy?—I am nearer the celestial hills, I have had more experience of my Lord, and should be more like Him. O Lord, keep far from me the curse of leanness of soul; let me not have to cry, “My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!” but may I be well-fed and nourished in thy house, that I may praise thy name.

# Word Live – 7/3/19

# Freedom!

## Prepare

This is a passage about financial debt and slave ownership. Debt is probably relevant to us in a way that slave ownership is not. However, both sections should stir us to worship God today!



## Bible passage: Deuteronomy 15:1–18

##### The Year for Canceling Debts

1 At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. 2 This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the LORD's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. 3 You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your brother owes you. 4 However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, 5 if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. 6 For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.

7 If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. 8 Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. 9 Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

##### Freeing Servants

12 If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. 13 And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. 14 Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today.

16 But if your servant says to you, "I do not want to leave you," because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, 17 then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your maidservant.

18 Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because his service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand. And the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

## Explore

**Debts cancelled**

In verses 1 to 11 God addresses his plan for Israel to have a recurring year when debts are cancelled (see [Leviticus 25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus+25&version=NIV)). Sadly, you can’t just quote this passage to your mortgage lender. However, three key thoughts:

**Eternal prospects transformed**

First, the Bible warns about the danger of getting into debt. Even if our culture expects us to be in debt and makes it easy to take out loans, we would be wise to plan carefully. Second, God wants his people to be generous to those in need. After all, our generosity can only ever be a pale reflection of God’s greater generosity to us. Third, praise God that while our bank may not cancel debts, our God does, and our eternal prospects are transformed as a result!

**Willingly working for the master**

In verses 12 to 18 we read of God’s character in regard to slave ownership. Again, notice how God wanted vulnerable people to be cared for. With such kindness it is understandable that some slaves would even choose to remain out of love for their ‘owners’ – to become a bondservant. Later in the Bible we see many epistles beginning with the apostles referring to themselves as servants (eg 2 Peter, James and Jude) – willingly working for the master who they love!

[Peter Mead](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Praise God that in Jesus our debt of sin has been cancelled, we have been rescued, and now we are willing servants of the God we love!

## Deeper Bible study

God sets many boundaries for his people, but in the matter of giving, there are no boundaries. God’s people are to give boundlessly, reflecting the way God has blessed (v 14) and will continue to bless them (vs 4–6). They are commanded to help the needy (vs 7,8) and, every seventh year, to write off debts (vs 1,2) and free any who have been reduced to selling themselves into slavery (v 12). The emphasis, however, is less on the act of giving, more on the underlying attitudes. God’s people must not be ‘hard-hearted’ or ‘tight-fisted’ (v 7), but ‘open-handed’, lending ‘freely’ (v 8); not constrained by cold-blooded calculations (v 9), but giving ungrudgingly (vs 10,18) and ‘liberally’ (v 14). God seeks a generosity compelled by love, not laws.

No figures or formulae are spelt out. The overwhelming thrust of the passage is on unsparing, unstinting generosity, taking its cue from God himself (v 15). Not only had God delivered his people from slavery, but he had not allowed them to leave Egypt as empty-handed refugees. Having instructed them to ask the Egyptians for silver, gold and clothing, ‘The Lord had made the Egyptians favourably disposed towards the people, and they gave them what they asked for’ ([Exod 12:36](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exod+12%3A36&version=NIV" \t "_blank)).

Obedience does indeed breed blessing (vs 5,10,18), but this passage does not support or promote prosperity theology. We don’t give in order that we may be blessed, but because we are blessed. In this light, consider Jesus’ words: ‘But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.’ ([Luke 6:35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+6%3A35&version=NIV)) By imitating God’s generosity, we show ourselves to be true children of the Most High – the greatest blessing of all.

In the light of God’s bountiful blessings, how should Christians respond to the current refugee crisis?

[Tanya Ferdinandusz](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/E-F/3526095.id)

## Looking at cancelling debts

**The seventh year**

In [Deuteronomy 15:1,2,39](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%2015:1,2,39;&version=72;) and [31:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%2031:10;&version=72;) we see that all debts were to be cancelled at the end of every seven years. This was not just a social phenomenon, it was a proclamation of ‘the Lord’s time for cancelling debts’ (v 2). In Israel, theological, social and economic issues were closely related. The covenantal nature of the obligation is clear in the fact that foreigners could be treated differently (v 3).  
  
**The year of Jubilee**

An extension of this principle of cancelling debts after seven years was the year of Jubilee, which took place after seven times seven years – ie every fiftieth year. You can read about it in [Leviticus 25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus%2025;&version=72;). Not only were those enslaved because of debts to be freed, but also lands lost because of debt were returned, and communities torn by inequality restored.  
  
**Luke 4:16–21**

In this passage Jesus reads from [Isaiah 61:1,2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2061:1-2;&version=72;) (Luke uses the Greek Septuagint translation) and then says that what was prophesied long ago is now coming to fulfilment in him. New Testament scholars see this as a paradigmatic passage showing how Luke views Jesus’ ministry. His concern for the poor, the marginalised (eg women, people with leprosy, tax collectors, prostitutes, shepherds) and the demonised all stem from his commitment to introducing the Jubilee principles of God’s kingdom. The cancelling of debts is used by Jesus as a metaphor for forgiveness of sins ([Luke 11:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2011:4;&version=72;)).

# Today in the Word – 7/3/19

# Mighty Is the Lord

**Read:** [**Zechariah 1:18–21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+1%3a18%e2%80%9321)

### Four Horns and Four Craftsmen

18Then I looked up, and there before me were four horns. 19I asked the angel who was speaking to me, “What are these?”

He answered me, “These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.”

20Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. 21I asked, “What are these coming to do?”

He answered, “These are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise their head, but the craftsmen have come to terrify them and throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+1%3a18%e2%80%9321#fen-NIV-22900a)]

#### Footnotes:

1. [Zechariah 1:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+1%3a18%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-22900) In Hebrew texts 1:18-21 is numbered 2:1-4.

Protestant reformer Martin Luther stood before the greatest powers of his day to defend the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone. His opponents used intimidation and threats in their attempt to persuade Luther to back down. “Of whom shall I be afraid?” Luther responded. “One with God is a majority.”

The LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory. Deuteronomy 20:4

Zechariah’s second vision had to do with horns (v. 18). These were not musical instruments but animal horns, like those of a bull. Horns sometimes appear in Scripture as a symbol of power. They can represent nations or those who rule. Horns were also a common feature in ancient architecture and design. The sacrificial altar in Jerusalem had horns (Ex. 29:12; 1 Kings 1:51).

The prophet also saw four craftsmen (v. 20). The Hebrew term can refer to many kinds of work. It could be used to speak of someone who works with metal, stone, or wood. The craftsmen were God’s agents employed by Him to defeat the powers. The number four in each case is probably not specific. It seems unlikely this prophecy was referring to four particular leaders or four specific servants of God who would oppose them, instead, it is a general promise of ultimate victory.

This vision not only promises that God will be victorious in the end but also reminds us that God works through His servants. In the New Testament, those who serve God are also called “workers” (Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1; Phil. 4:3). God often exercises His power through human agents. You may feel insignificant. However, if you belong to Jesus Christ, you are God’s agent

### Apply the Word

If you find it difficult to share the hope of Christ with others, remember that when you talk about Christ with someone, you are not alone. You are God’s agent. He displays His power through your life and your words. The next time you feel nervous before talking to someone about Christ, remember that one with God is a majority!

### Pray with Us

Pray for Moody Distance Learning’s instructional quality team—Doug Murphy, Andrew Beaty, Troy Dueck, Nicholas Moon, Madeline Seghers, and Tyrome Turner—as they launch and oversee online courses, as well as Moody’s accreditation reporting and assessment.

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/3/19

# Honest to God

**Read:** [**Isaiah 1:12–18**](https://www.odb.org/2019/07/03/honest-to-god/)

12When you come to appear before me,  
    who has asked this of you,  
    this trampling of my courts?  
13Stop bringing meaningless offerings!  
    Your incense is detestable to me.  
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—  
    I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.  
14Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals  
    I hate with all my being.  
They have become a burden to me;  
    I am weary of bearing them.  
15When you spread out your hands in prayer,  
    I hide my eyes from you;  
even when you offer many prayers,  
    I am not listening.

Your hands are full of blood!

16Wash and make yourselves clean.  
    Take your evil deeds out of my sight;  
    stop doing wrong.  
17Learn to do right; seek justice.  
    Defend the oppressed.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+1%3A12%E2%80%9318" \l "fen-NIV-17672a" \o "See footnote a)]  
Take up the cause of the fatherless;  
    plead the case of the widow.

18“Come now, let us settle the matter,”  
    says the Lord.  
“Though your sins are like scarlet,  
    they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red as crimson,  
    they shall be like wool.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Isaiah 1:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+1%3A12%E2%80%9318#en-NIV-17672) Or justice. / Correct the oppressor

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. [Psalm 32:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+32%3A5)

My three-year-old grandson’s day was off to a rotten start. He couldn’t find his favorite shirt. The shoes he wanted to wear were too hot. He fussed and fumed at his grandmother and then sat down to cry.

“Why are you so upset?” I asked. We talked for a while and after he calmed down, I gently inquired, “Have you been good for Grandma?” He looked thoughtfully at his shoes and responded, “No, I was bad. I’m sorry.”

My heart went out to him. Instead of denying what he had done, he was honest. In the following moments we asked Jesus to forgive us when we do wrong and to help us do better.

In Isaiah 1, God confronts His people about wrongs they’d committed. Bribes and injustice were rampant in the courts, and orphans and widows were taken advantage of for material gain. Yet even then God responded mercifully, asking the people of Judah to confess what they’d done and turn from it: “Come now, let us settle the matter . . . . Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).

God longs for us to be open with Him about our sins. He meets honesty and repentance with loving forgiveness: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Because our God is merciful, new beginnings await!

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

#### Reflect & Pray

What sins have you not been honest with God about? What’s holding you back from confessing them to Him?

Abba, Father, help me to turn away from the sin in my life and make a new beginning with You today.

#### Insight

The prophet Isaiah, whose name means “the Lord saves,” warned an unrepentant Judah of God’s impending judgment (Isaiah 1–12) through the Babylonian exile (39:6–7). He spoke of God’s grace (chs. 40–55) and a future glorious restoration for all who would repent (chs. 11; 56–66). Here in Isaiah 1, God calls His people to consider carefully their sinfulness (vv. 2–15). But He assures them that no matter how tainted and sinful they are (v. 18), God will cleanse, forgive, and bless them if they “are willing and obedient” (v. 19). He also warns of severe punishment if they fail to repent (v. 20).

# God Calling – 7/3/19

# Spiritual Fullness

Our Lord, we love Thee and desire to live for Thee in all things.

My children,  "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."  That is satisfaction.

Only in the fullness of spiritual things can the heartsick and faint and weary be satisfied, healed, and rested.  "Lord," we cry, "to whom shall we go but to Thee."  "Thou preparest the table before us."  Bread of Life, Food from Heaven.

How few realize that the feeding of the four thousand and the five thousand was in each case but an illustration of the way in which I should one day be the Food of My people.

Think of the wonder of revelation still to be seen by those who live with Me.  All these hundreds of years, and much of what I said and did is still mystery, much of My Life on earth is still spiritually unexplored country.  Only to the simple and loving heart that walks with me can these things be revealed.  I have carefully hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.

Do not weigh your spirits down with the sins and sorrows of the world.  Only a Christ can do that and live.  Look for the loving, the true, the kindly, the brave in the many all around you.

As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.  Psalm 42:1

# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/4/19

# One of God’s Great “Don’ts”



Do not fret— it only causes harm. —[Psalm 37:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Psalm+37%3A8)

Fretting means getting ourselves “out of joint” mentally or spiritually. It is one thing to say, “Do not fret,” but something very different to have such a nature that you find yourself unable to fret. It’s easy to say, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” ([Psalm 37:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+37:7)) until our own little world is turned upside down and we are forced to live in confusion and agony like so many other people. Is it possible to “rest in the Lord” then? If this “Do not” doesn’t work there, then it will not work anywhere. This “Do not” must work during our days of difficulty and uncertainty, as well as our peaceful days, or it will never work. And if it will not work in your particular case, it will not work for anyone else. Resting in the Lord is not dependent on your external circumstances at all, but on your relationship with God Himself.

Worrying always results in sin. We tend to think that a little anxiety and worry are simply an indication of how wise we really are, yet it is actually a much better indication of just how wicked we are. Fretting rises from our determination to have our own way. Our Lord never worried and was never anxious, because His purpose was never to accomplish His own plans but to fulfill God’s plans. Fretting is wickedness for a child of God.

Have you been propping up that foolish soul of yours with the idea that your circumstances are too much for God to handle? Set all your opinions and speculations aside and “abide under the shadow of the Almighty” ([Psalm 91:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+91:1)). Deliberately tell God that you will not fret about whatever concerns you. All our fretting and worrying is caused by planning without God.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

To those who have had no agony Jesus says, “I have nothing for you; stand on your own feet, square your own shoulders. I have come for the man who knows he has a bigger handful than he can cope with, who knows there are forces he cannot touch; I will do everything for him if he will let Me. Only let a man grant he needs it, and I will do it for him.”  
The Shadow of an Agony

# CCEL – 7/4/19

Leaning on Jesus' bosom.—[JOHN 13:23.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.13.html" \l "John.13.23)

As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.—They brought young children to him, that he should touch them. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.—Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.—A high Priest . . . touched with the feeling of our infirmities.—In his love and in his pity he redeemed them.

I will not leave you comfortless: (marg. orphans) I will come to you.—Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

[Isa. 66:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.66.html" \l "Isa.66.13). -[Mark 10:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.10.html" \l "Mark.10.13),[16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.10.html" \l "Mark.10.16). -[Matt. 15:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.15.html" \l "Matt.15.32). -[Heb. 4:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.4.html#Heb.4.15). -[Isa. 63:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.63.html" \l "Isa.63.9).[John 14:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.14.html" \l "John.14.18). -[Isa. 49:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.49.html" \l "Isa.49.15).[Rev. 7:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.7.html" \l "Rev.7.17).

“Sanctify them through thy truth.” **[John 17:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.17)**

Sanctification begins in regeneration. The Spirit of God infuses into man that new living principle by which he becomes “a new creature” in Christ Jesus. This work, which begins in the new birth, is carried on in two ways—mortification, whereby the lusts of the flesh are subdued and kept under; and vivification, by which the life which God has put within us is made to be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. This is carried on every day in what is called “perseverance,” by which the Christian is preserved and continued in a gracious state, and is made to abound in good works unto the praise and glory of God; and it culminates or comes to perfection, in “glory,” when the soul, being thoroughly purged, is caught up to dwell with holy beings at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But while the Spirit of God is thus the author of sanctification, yet there is a visible agency employed which must not be forgotten. “Sanctify them,” said Jesus, “through thy truth: thy word is truth.” The passages of Scripture which prove that the instrument of our sanctification is the Word of God are very many. The Spirit of God brings to our minds the precepts and doctrines of truth, and applies them with power. These are heard in the ear, and being received in the heart, they work in us to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. The truth is the sanctifier, and if we do not hear or read the truth, we shall not grow in sanctification. We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Do not say of any error, “It is a mere matter of opinion.” No man indulges an error of judgment, without sooner or later tolerating an error in practice. Hold fast the truth, for by so holding the truth shall you be sanctified by the Spirit of God.

# Word Live – 7/4/19

# Don't forget to remember

## Prepare

What reminders do you have set up in your home, or on your phone, to help you not to forget important things? What reminders do we need to remember all that God has done for us?



## Bible passage: Deuteronomy 16:1–22

##### Passover

1 Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night. 2 Sacrifice as the Passover to the LORD your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his Name. 3 Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. 4 Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days. Do not let any of the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain until morning.

5 You must not sacrifice the Passover in any town the LORD your God gives you 6 except in the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name. There you must sacrifice the Passover in the evening, when the sun goes down, on the anniversary of your departure from Egypt. 7 Roast it and eat it at the place the LORD your God will choose. Then in the morning return to your tents. 8 For six days eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day hold an assembly to the LORD your God and do no work.

##### Feast of Weeks

9 Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. 10 Then celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you. 11 And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you. 12 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and follow carefully these decrees.

##### Feast of Tabernacles

13 Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. 14 Be joyful at your Feast—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. 15 For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.

16 Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed: 17 Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

##### Judges

18 Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. 19 Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. 20 Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

##### Worshiping Other Gods

21 Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the LORD your God, 22 and do not erect a sacred stone, for these the LORD your God hates.

## Explore

**Preparing the people**

Remember that Moses is preparing the people to enter the land and to establish their nation there. At the end of the section he instructs them to make sure that judges are in place in each town to ensure that all is fair and just (vs 18–20). He warns them not to worship other gods (vs 21,22). But the majority of this chapter is given to three celebrations.

**Pilgrim feasts**

There are seven annual feasts described in [Leviticus 23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus+23&version=NIV), and here Moses identifies the three ‘pilgrim feasts’ – that is, feasts where the men of the nation were expected to travel together to the location God chose for them to celebrate.

**Offering of gratitude**

The three feasts were Passover in the early spring, Pentecost some weeks later, and then Tabernacles in the autumn. Each was to be in the right location, with each person bringing an offering of gratitude to God. In each case, they were to remember what God had done for them in Egypt (vs 3,12) and in the wilderness (where they lived in tents, see [Leviticus 23:42,43](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus+23%3A42%2C43&version=NIV)).

**Regular reminders**

Like Israel, we also need regular reminders of God’s goodness to us. We have the regular celebration of the Lord’s Supper to remember the cross. Perhaps we need to institute other celebrations to help us not to forget!

[Peter Mead](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Reflect on the words: ‘Take, eat. Take, drink. Do this in remembrance of me.’

## Deeper Bible study

The three main Jewish feasts – Unleavened Bread, Weeks, Tabernacles (v 16) – are linked to the Exodus event, in which God’s people experienced his great power in delivering them from slavery, as well as his gracious provision for them throughout the wilderness years. The Exodus was Israel’s defining moment. Just as a wedding anniversary both commemorates the inauguration of the marriage covenant and celebrates the couple’s ongoing love-relationship, these feasts commemorated the birth of a nation and celebrated the relationship between God and his covenant people.

Forgetfulness of God frequently led to idolatry, against which stern warnings are issued (vs 21,22). The way to avoid forgetfulness is planned and purposeful remembering. Today, increasingly, God is being removed from our public squares. Moses, in contrast, weaves remembrance of God into the very fabric of everyday life, taking existing agricultural festivals and investing them with new meaning. The carefully detailed instructions focus on making the observance of these feasts both meaningful and memorable (vs 2,3,5–8,10,15a). Yet these are not mere ritual observances, but an expression, an experience, and also an enjoyment, of the people’s covenant relationships – with God, and also with one another.

The festivals promised blessing but they also imposed demands. The people must journey to the place that God dictates (vs 6,11,15,16), setting aside their work and setting apart extended time. They are to gather as a community (vs 11,14), not just in solemn commemoration but also to ‘celebrate’ (vs 1,10,13) and rejoice (vs 11,14). Grateful remembrance of God’s great deliverance and gracious provision must also give rise to willing and generous giving (vs 10,17).

We have our own festival of remembrance, the Lord’s Supper, which Jesus instituted ([Luke 22:14–20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+22%3A14%E2%80%9320&version=NIV)). How does your preparation and participation in this celebration compare with what you’ve read today?

[Tanya Ferdinandusz](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/E-F/3526095.id)

## Annual feasts and festivals in Israel

The main annual religious festivals in Israel were connected with the seasons and the farmer’s year. Three times a year, in the spring, early summer and autumn, the men were supposed to go to Jerusalem to present their offerings to God (see [Exodus 23:14–19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2023:14–19;&version=72;) and [Deuteronomy 16:1–17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%2016:1–17;&version=72;)).  
  
**1 Passover and Unleavened Bread**

The establishment of the Passover Feast is described in [Exodus 12:1–28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2012:1–28;&version=72;). When God saved Israel from Egypt he ‘passed over’ the houses where the blood of a lamb had been sprinkled on the door-posts and lintel, thus sparing the lives of their firstborn sons. Bread made without leaven was eaten at the Passover meal and through the coming week as a reminder of the hurried preparations the people had to make to leave Egypt. On the last day the first fruits of the barley harvest were presented to God.  
  
**2 Ingathering or Weeks (later Pentecost)**

Fifty days after Pentecost at the end of the grain harvest a priest offered two loaves made with the new flour, along with animal sacrifices. This was a time of joyful celebration.  
  
**3 Tabernacles or Booths**  
Held in autumn when all the fruit crops had been harvested, this was a fun week when the people camped out in gardens or on roof-tops to remember how Israel had lived in tents after the exodus.  
  
In addition to these three main feasts there were other regular festivals:  
  
• **Trumpets.** On the first day of the seventh month the trumpets sounded for a special celebration. See [Numbers 29:1–6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers%2029:1–6;&version=72;).  
• **Day of Atonement.** On this most solemn day the whole nation confessed their sins and asked for God’s cleansing. See [Leviticus 23:26–32](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus%2023:26–32;&version=72;).  
• **Purim.** This feast celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people when Haman plotted against them ([Esther 9:20–28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Esther%209:20–28;&version=72;)).  
• **Dedication/Lights.** This festival was inaugurated to celebrate the rededication of the second temple by Judas Maccabaeus in 165 BC. It is referred to in [John 10:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010:22;&version=72;).

## Reflective prayer activity

What an amazing history the people of Israel were able to celebrate! Deliverance from oppression and slavery by their God who then led them through the desert to the Promised Land, a place of abundance and prosperity. The Passover and Feast of Tabernacles celebrates these things and reminds us how we, too, must celebrate what God has done for us.  
  
Make a timeline to represent the history of your life. Mark in the key moments when God demonstrated his generosity to you, eg:  
  
• At what point did you commit your life to him?  
• What gifts of Christian friendship has he given you which have particularly strengthened your faith?  
• When were the times that he particularly helped you with a spiritual issue?  
• How and when has he looked after you materially?  
  
As you do this you will build up a picture of a life lived under the blessing of God. Of course, this doesn’t have to mean that everything has gone well in your life all the time. In fact, those who have experienced struggle often testify to a far greater awareness of God’s presence with them than when things have been easy.  
  
Use your timeline to thank God for all that you have received from him, whether in major or minor ways, and to recommit your life to him for all the future may bring.

# Today in the Word – 7/4/19

# God’s Measuring Line

**Read:** [**Zechariah 2:1-13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+2%3a1-13)

### A Man With a Measuring Line

2 [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+2%3a1-13#fen-NIV-22901a)]Then I looked up, and there before me was a man with a measuring line in his hand. 2I asked, “Where are you going?”

He answered me, “To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is.”

3While the angel who was speaking to me was leaving, another angel came to meet him 4and said to him: “Run, tell that young man, ‘Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and animals in it. 5And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will be its glory within.’

6“Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north,” declares the Lord, “for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven,” declares the Lord.

7“Come, Zion! Escape, you who live in Daughter Babylon!” 8For this is what the Lord Almighty says: “After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you—for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye— 9I will surely raise my hand against them so that their slaves will plunder them.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+2%3a1-13" \l "fen-NIV-22909b" \o "See footnote b)] Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me.

10“Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you,” declares the Lord. 11“Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. 12The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem. 13Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Zechariah 2:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+2%3a1-13#en-NIV-22901) In Hebrew texts 2:1-13 is numbered 2:5-17.
2. [Zechariah 2:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+2%3a1-13#en-NIV-22909) Or says after … eye: 9“I … plunder them.”

The Weights and Measures Division of the US government works to promote uniformity and accuracy. It is easy to see how important weights and measures are to commerce, but accurate measurements are also important for builders. A common proverb among carpenters advises, "Measure twice and cut once."

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. Revelation 21:15

Zechariah’s third of eight visions was of a man with a measuring line (we would probably call it a measuring tape today). His mission was to measure Jerusalem (v. 2). As soon as this divinely appointed surveyor set out, the interpreting angel ordered Zechariah to run after him with a message about Jerusalem’s future. The scope of God’s promise extends far beyond the immediate project of rebuilding the temple to the Messianic kingdom. They are promises of restoration and peace. They also include an invitation to those who remained in Babylon to flee to Jerusalem (vv. 6–7). Israel’s enemies were God’s enemies (vv. 7–9). He would raise His hand against those who laid their hand upon “the apple of his eye.” Two of the promises are of special interest to the church. One is the promise of God’s presence in verse 10. This promise will be completely fulfilled when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven (Rev. 21:2). The other promise is that the nations will be included among God’s people (v. 11). This promise foreshadowed the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles.

The prophet’s words are a reminder that the hope of Jerusalem is also the hope of the church. Through Christ, those who otherwise would have remained outsiders to the promises of God can be included (Eph. 2:12). Just as Abraham did, they can become friends of God by faith (Rom. 4:16). The church’s Savior is also Israel’s promised Messiah.

### Apply the Word

God is still deeply interested in Jerusalem. Psalm 122:6–7 tells us how we can pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.” Spend some time asking God for His peace to rule in your life and in our world.

### Pray with Us

Pray with us for Moody students as they celebrate today’s 4th of July holiday with family and friends. We also thank our donors who give toward student tuition so these men and women can be free to follow God’s calling.

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/4/19

# Every Story

**Read:** [**Luke 24:17–27**](https://www.odb.org/2019/07/04/every-story-whispers-his-name/)

17He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. 18One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

19“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

25He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. [Luke 24:27](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24%3A27)

I opened the whimsically illustrated children’s Bible and began to read to my grandson. Immediately we were enthralled as the story of God’s love and provision unfurled in prose. Marking our place, I turned the book over and read the title once again: The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name.

Every story whispers His name.

To be honest, sometimes the Bible, especially the Old Testament, is hard to understand. Why do those who don’t know God seem to triumph over God’s own? How can God permit such cruelty when we know that His character is pure and that His purposes are for our good?

After His resurrection, Jesus met two followers on the road to Emmaus who didn’t recognize Him and were struggling with disappointment over the death of their hoped-for Messiah (Luke 24:19–24). They had “hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (v. 21). Luke then records how Jesus reassured them: “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (v. 27).

Every story whispers His name, even the hard stories, because they reveal the comprehensive brokenness of our world and our need for a Rescuer. Every act, every event, every intervention points to the redemption God designed for His wayward loved ones: to bring us back to Himself.

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

#### Reflect & Pray

How is God’s rescue at work in your life? What stories trouble you today? In what ways (however small) can you see God at work in them?

Dear God, help me listen as You whisper Your name through the stories of Scripture. Every story.

#### Insight

Christ’s teaching in Luke 24 gives us insight as to how we should read the Old Testament—with Him at the center. In verse 27 Jesus referred to the Old Testament using the terms “Moses and all the Prophets.” Speaking of the same sacred writings in verse 44, He used the threefold division “the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” and stated that these writings spoke of Him. John 5:39 essentially says the same thing, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.”

# God Calling – 7/4/19

# Friend of Mine

What man calls conversion is often only the discovery of the Great Friend.  What man calls religion is the knowledge of the Great Friend.  What man calls holiness is the imitation of the Great Friend

Perfection, that perfection I enjoined on all, the being perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect, is the being like the Great Friend and in turn becoming to others a Great Friend too

I am your Friend.  Think again of all that means -- Friend and Savior.  A friend is ready to help, anticipating every want, hand outstretched to help and encourage, or to ward off danger, voice of tenderness to soothe tired nerves and speak peace to restlessness and fear.

Think of what, to you, your friend is and then from that, try to see a little of what the Perfect Friend, the tireless, self-less, all-conquering, all miracle-working Friend would be.  That Friend, and more even than your heart can imagine, that Friend am I.

Were I to read My Kingdom -- My Kingdom of the Child Hearts -- the doctrines of your churches, so often there would be no response.  But the simple rules I gave My followers are known, loved, and lived by them all.

In all things seek simplicity.

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.  Proverbs 18:24

# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/5/19

# Don’t Plan Without God



Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. —[Psalm 37:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Psalm+37%3A5)

**Don’t plan without God.** God seems to have a delightful way of upsetting the plans we have made, when we have not taken Him into account. We get ourselves into circumstances that were not chosen by God, and suddenly we realize that we have been making our plans without Him— that we have not even considered Him to be a vital, living factor in the planning of our lives. And yet the only thing that will keep us from even the possibility of worrying is to bring God in as the greatest factor in all of our planning.

In spiritual issues it is customary for us to put God first, but we tend to think that it is inappropriate and unnecessary to put Him first in the practical, everyday issues of our lives. If we have the idea that we have to put on our “spiritual face” before we can come near to God, then we will never come near to Him. We must come as we are.

**Don’t plan with a concern for evil in mind.** Does God really mean for us to plan without taking the evil around us into account? “Love…thinks no evil” ([1 Corinthians 13:4-5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+13:4-5)). Love is not ignorant of the existence of evil, but it does not take it into account as a factor in planning. When we were apart from God, we did take evil into account, doing all of our planning with it in mind, and we tried to reason out all of our work from its standpoint.

**Don’t plan with a rainy day in mind.** You cannot hoard things for a rainy day if you are truly trusting Christ. Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled…” ([John 14:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14:1)). God will not keep your heart from being troubled. It is a command— “Let not….” To do it, continually pick yourself up, even if you fall a hundred and one times a day, until you get into the habit of putting God first and planning with Him in mind.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

There is no condition of life in which we cannot abide in Jesus. We have to learn to abide in Him wherever we are placed. Our Brilliant Heritage

# CCEL – 7/5/19

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.—[I JOHN 4:16.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.16)

God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?—The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

We love him, because he first loved us.

Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

[Eph. 2:4-7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.4).[John 3:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.3.html" \l "John.3.16). -[Rom. 8:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html#Rom.8.32). -[Psa. 145:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.145.html#Ps.145.9).[I John 4:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.19).[Luke 1:45](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.1.html" \l "Luke.1.45).

“Called to be saints.” **[Romans 1:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.1.html" \l "Rom.1.7)**

We are very apt to regard the apostolic saints as if they were “saints” in a more especial manner than the other children of God. All are “saints” whom God has called by His grace, and sanctified by His Spirit; but we are apt to look upon the apostles as extraordinary beings, scarcely subject to the same weaknesses and temptations as ourselves. Yet in so doing we are forgetful of this truth, that the nearer a man lives to God the more intensely has he to mourn over his own evil heart; and the more his Master honours him in his service, the more also doth the evil of the flesh vex and tease him day by day. The fact is, if we had seen the apostle Paul, we should have thought him remarkably like the rest of the chosen family: and if we had talked with him, we should have said, “We find that his experience and ours are much the same. He is more faithful, more holy, and more deeply taught than we are, but he has the selfsame trials to endure. Nay, in some respects he is more sorely tried than ourselves.” Do not, then, look upon the ancient saints as being exempt either from infirmities or sins; and do not regard them with that mystic reverence which will almost make us idolaters. Their holiness is attainable even by us. We are “called to be saints” by that same voice which constrained them to their high vocation. It is a Christian’s duty to force his way into the inner circle of saintship; and if these saints were superior to us in their attainments, as they certainly were, let us follow them; let us emulate their ardour and holiness. We have the same light that they had, the same grace is accessible to us, and why should we rest satisfied until we have equalled them in heavenly character? They lived with Jesus, they lived for Jesus, therefore they grew like Jesus. Let us live by the same Spirit as they did, “looking unto Jesus,” and our saintship will soon be apparent.

# Word Live – 7/5/19

# Only the best information

## Prepare

Can any harm come from finding out about the future? Surely such things as horoscopes and seances are just a bit of fun? Absolutely not! God has a much better plan…



## Bible passage: Deuteronomy 18:9–22

### Occult Practices

9When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord; because of these same detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. 13You must be blameless before the Lord your God.

### The Prophet

14The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the Lord your God has not permitted you to do so. 15The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. 16For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.”

17The Lord said to me: “What they say is good. 18I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. 19I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. 20But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.”

21You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?” 22If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.

## Explore

**Forbidden**

Humans in every culture have always been fascinated by the idea of information ‘from beyond’. God was clear that they were not to indulge in any of the fortune-telling practices of the nations around them (vs 9–14). These practices sought to manipulate the gods and the future. There was witchcraft, fortune-telling, consulting the dead. God put a big ‘Forbidden!’ sign across them all.

**Trustworthy source**

So, did God want his people to have access to information from the spiritual realm? Actually, yes he did. However, he wanted them to get their information from a trustworthy source that would not lead them astray. From verse 15 we find the description of the great prophet God would send. This coming prophet, like Moses, would be sent by God; he would be Jewish; he would speak God’s words – God wanted them to hear him (vs 15,18).

**Protection mechanism**

As a protection mechanism, God ordered Israel to kill any false prophets that came to them. A false prophet promotes another god or makes predictions that do not come true. We are not expected to kill false prophets today, but be sure not to listen to them!

[Peter Mead](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Consider how amazing it is that we have access to God’s very words in the ministry of Jesus!

## Deeper Bible study

Deuteronomy repeatedly revisits the subject of boundaries and choices. In today’s passage, the boundaries concern knowledge and power. Occult, from the Latin word occultus, refers to what is hidden or secret. The occult practices listed (vs 10,11) involve attempts to obtain supernatural knowledge through dealings with the spirit world. ‘Knowledge is power’:1 underlying the quest for knowledge is the desire for power, recalling that age-old temptation to ‘be like God’ ([Gen 3:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+3%3A5&version=NIV)).

Once God’s people crossed over to Canaan (v 9), they would have to choose to whose voice they would listen (vs 14,15). Although God’s boundary lines are tightly drawn, they are designed for blessing. Satan is the deceiver and the destroyer. He denied God’s word, cast doubt on God’s goodness and deceived Eve with an empty promise ([Gen 3:1–5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+3%3A1%E2%80%935&version=NIV)). The occult practices that God deems ‘detestable’ (vs 9,12) are also deceptive, offering an illusion of control but in reality giving Satan a foothold to seize control of hearts and destroy lives. The ‘spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms’ ([Eph 6:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph+6%3A12&version=NIV" \t "_blank)) are frighteningly real and powerful. We flirt with them at our peril (v 12).

‘The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may follow all the words of this law.’ ([Deut 29:29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut+29%3A29&version=NIV" \t "_blank)) God alone is the real deal. Through his prophets – and finally and most fully through Jesus – he reveals, not necessarily what we want to know, but what we need to know for salvation. The command ‘listen to him’ (v 15) is echoed by the Father at Jesus’s transfiguration ([Matt 17:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+17%3A5&version=NIV)). His words are all we need, his voice is the only one we must heed.

Where do you think the boundary lines of our faith need to be made clearer? What issues need to be addressed? By whom? How? What can you do?

1 After Francis Bacon, 1561–1626

## Studying the Canaanites

**Don’t copy the Canaanites!**

The discovery in 1929 of the ancient city of Ugarit has given us a great deal of information on the Canaanites. Sacred texts describing mythology and religious practices have been translated. These amplify the (inevitably) negative picture from the Old Testament as we hear the Canaanites themselves describe their spiritual values.   
  
**Divination**

Everything mentioned in verses 10 and 11 amounts to the same thing: foretelling the future in one way or another. The Canaanites:  
   • sacrificed animals in order to examine the liver  
   • read omens in the birth of malformed foetuses (animal and human)   
   • practiced a form of astrology   
   • consulted the dead   
   • mixed oil and water to interpret the resulting patterns   
   • consulted oracles   
  
These things were regarded as ‘detestable’, not simply because they were repulsive. To practice any of these things is to declare implicitly that one did not really trust in Yahweh, the God of the Israelites.   
  
**Child sacrifice?**

The NRSV provides the alternative translation ‘make a son or daughter pass through the fire’ for verse 10. The Hebrew implies ‘sacrifice’, but the texts from Ugarit never mention child sacrifice. Though we do not know what it meant to make someone ‘pass through the fire’, we suspect this was also a method of foretelling the future, like the other things mentioned in these verses.

# Today in the Word – 7/5/19

# Cleansed by God

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

### Clean Garments for the High Priest

3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+3%3a1%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-22914a)] standing at his right side to accuse him. 2The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”

3Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. 4The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.”

Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.”

5Then I said, “Put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the Lord stood by.

6The angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: 7“This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘If you will walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.

8“‘Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. 9See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+3%3a1%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-22922b)] on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.

10“‘In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Zechariah 3:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+3%3a1%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-22914) Hebrew satan means adversary.
2. [Zechariah 3:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+3%3a1%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-22922) Or facets

Some people (often single males), rely on the "sniff test" to ascertain whether their clothes are clean enough to wear. According to Reader's Digest, 70 percent of the soil on your clothing is invisible. Your clothes may look clean, but they still need to be washed. Even if they pass the sniff test!

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. Revelation 21:15

Zechariah’s fourth vision involved the high priest Joshua. He had been the high priest sixteen years earlier when the exiles returned from captivity in Babylon. In a shocking image, Zechariah saw Joshua clothed in priestly garments spattered with human excrement. Satan stood on his right side to accuse him. This picture probably did not reflect Joshua’s personal character so much as it portrayed the condition of those he represented (v. 8). It is certainly true that even the works of God’s best servants are flawed by sin. In a way, this disturbing portrait of Joshua is a picture of us as well. However, in a beautifully symbolic act, the interpreting angel commanded that Joshua’s filthy garments be replaced and announced that his sin was forgiven (vv. 4–5).

This vision not only anticipates the gospel’s promise of a new nature but also foreshadows the coming of the great high priest Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews describes the problem faced by Israel’s ordinary priests. Every priest was a sinner just like those he represented. The high priest had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins, as well as the sins of the people (Heb. 5:3). But Jesus Christ had no sin (John 8:46). Because of this, He was able to be both the perfect High Priest and the perfect sacrifice when He sacrificed Himself “once for all” (Heb. 7:27). This transforming power of Christ’s forgiveness is compared to a change of clothes in several places in the New Testament (Rom. 13:13–14; Eph. 4:22–25; Col. 3:10–12).

### Apply the Word

Every time you wash your hands or change your clothes, remember today’s lesson. When you trust in Christ, you are clothed in His righteousness! Like Joshua in Zechariah’s vision, you must receive this gift from Christ Himself. Once you receive His righteousness, make a daily choice to live in its power. Take off the old ways and put on the new

### Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer Samuel Choy, chief marketing officer, as he heads Moody’s strategic marketing initiatives and expands the ways we interact with the local communities and public at large.

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/5/19

# Practicing What We Preach

**Read:** [**1 John 2:7–11**](https://www.odb.org/2019/07/05/practicing-what-we-preach/)

7Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

9Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+2%3A7%E2%80%9311#fen-NIV-30560a)] is still in the darkness. 10Anyone who loves their brother and sister[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+2%3A7%E2%80%9311#fen-NIV-30561b)] lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. 11But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

#### Footnotes:

1. [1 John 2:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+2%3A7%E2%80%9311#en-NIV-30560) The Greek word for brother or sister (adelphos) refers here to a believer, whether man or woman, as part of God’s family; also in verse 11; and in 3:15, 17; 4:20; 5:16.
2. [1 John 2:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+2%3A7%E2%80%9311#en-NIV-30561) The Greek word for brother and sister (adelphos) refers here to a believer, whether man or woman, as part of God’s family; also in 3:10; 4:20, 21.

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. [1 John 2:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+2%3A9)

Pastor and writer Eugene Peterson had the opportunity to hear a lecture by Swiss physician and highly respected pastoral counselor Paul Tournier. Peterson had read the doctor’s works, and admired his approach to healing. The lecture left a deep impression on Peterson. As he listened, he had the feeling that Tournier lived what he spoke and spoke what he lived. Peterson chose this word to describe his experience: “Congruence. It is the best word I can come up with.”

Congruence—it’s what some refer to as “practicing what you preach” or “walking your talk.” The apostle John stresses that if any of us “claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister,” then we’re “still in the darkness” (1 John 2:9). In essence, our lives and our words simply don’t match up. John goes further to say such people “do not know where they are going” (v. 11). The word he chose to describe how incongruence leaves us? Blind.

Living closely aligned to God by allowing the light of His Word to illuminate our paths keeps us from living blind. The result is a godly vision that gives clarity and focus to our days—our words and actions match up. When others observe this, the impression is not necessarily that of someone who knows everywhere they’re going, but of someone who clearly knows who they’re following.

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

#### Reflect & Pray

In what ways does the word congruence describe you? How can you grow to live a more consistent life?

Jesus, I want my words and actions to match up. There are times I fall short, but my desire is to grow more consistent each day. Help me, please, so that everyone listening and watching my life will be drawn to You.

#### Insight

Part of John’s purpose in 1 John is to address those who were stirring up controversy in the Christian community. The exact situation is uncertain, but John confronts it by urging the church to assess whether a person confesses the truth about Christ in both words and lifestyle (3:7–9). And the primary way to assess someone’s way of life is whether or not their life is filled with Christlike love (v. 10).

In the Bible “hatred” and “love” are not seen as primarily referring to an emotional reaction to someone or something, but to an attitude reflected in actions. John teaches that true love is sacrificial like Christ’s (vv. 16–18). Living with Christ’s love is possible because we live “in him” (2:5–6). Through the Spirit, Christ’s power and light shines in believers, filling them with His self-giving love (vv. 8–10).

# God Calling – 7/5/19

# You Are Invincible

I am with you all the time controlling, blessing, and helping you.  No man or woman can stand against My Will for you.  A whole world of men and women cannot do this -- if you trust Me and place your affairs in My Hands.

To the passenger it may seem as if each wave would overwhelm the ship, or turn it aside from its course.  The captain knows by experience that, in spite of wind and wave, he steers a straight course to the haven where he would be.

So trust Me, the Captain of your salvation.

And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven; there shall no man be able to stand before thee.  Deuteronomy 7:24

# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/6/19

# Visions Becoming Reality



The parched ground shall become a pool… —[Isaiah 35:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Isaiah+35%3A7)

We always have a vision of something before it actually becomes real to us. When we realize that the vision is real, but is not yet real in us, Satan comes to us with his temptations, and we are inclined to say that there is no point in even trying to continue. Instead of the vision becoming real to us, we have entered into a valley of humiliation.

Life is not as idle ore,  
But iron dug from central gloom,  
And battered by the shocks of doom  
To shape and use.

God gives us a vision, and then He takes us down to the valley to batter us into the shape of that vision. It is in the valley that so many of us give up and faint. Every God-given vision will become real if we will only have patience. Just think of the enormous amount of free time God has! He is never in a hurry. Yet we are always in such a frantic hurry. While still in the light of the glory of the vision, we go right out to do things, but the vision is not yet real in us. God has to take us into the valley and put us through fires and floods to batter us into shape, until we get to the point where He can trust us with the reality of the vision. Ever since God gave us the vision, He has been at work. He is getting us into the shape of the goal He has for us, and yet over and over again we try to escape from the Sculptor’s hand in an effort to batter ourselves into the shape of our own goal.

The vision that God gives is not some unattainable castle in the sky, but a vision of what God wants you to be down here. Allow the Potter to put you on His wheel and whirl you around as He desires. Then as surely as God is God, and you are you, you will turn out as an exact likeness of the vision. But don’t lose heart in the process. If you have ever had a vision from God, you may try as you will to be satisfied on a lower level, but God will never allow it.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 7/6/19

Let your speech be always with grace.—[COL. 4:6.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.4.html" \l "Col.4.6)

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.—Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.—A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.—By thy words thou shalt be justified.—The tongue of the wise is health.

They that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.—Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, . . . see that ye abound in this grace also.

[Prov. 25:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.25.html" \l "Prov.25.11). -[Eph. 4:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.4.html" \l "Eph.4.29). -[Matt. 12:35](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.12.html" \l "Matt.12.35). -[Matt. 12:37](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.12.html" \l "Matt.12.37). -[Prov. 12:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.12.html" \l "Prov.12.18).[Mal. 3:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mal.3.html" \l "Mal.3.16).[Jer. 15:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.15.html" \l "Jer.15.19). -[II Cor. 8:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.8.html" \l "iiCor.8.7).

“Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.” **[Proverbs 1:33](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.1.html" \l "Prov.1.33)**

Divine love is rendered conspicuous when it shines in the midst of judgments. Fair is that lone star which smiles through the rifts of the thunder clouds; bright is the oasis which blooms in the wilderness of sand; so fair and so bright is love in the midst of wrath. When the Israelites provoked the Most High by their continued idolatry, he punished them by withholding both dew and rain, so that their land was visited by a sore famine; but while he did this, he took care that his own chosen ones should be secure. If all other brooks are dry, yet shall there be one reserved for Elijah; and when that fails, God shall still preserve for him a place of sustenance; nay, not only so, the Lord had not simply one “Elijah,” but he had a remnant according to the election of grace, who were hidden by fifties in a cave, and though the whole land was subject to famine, yet these fifties in the cave were fed, and fed from Ahab’s table too by His faithful, God-fearing steward, Obadiah. Let us from this draw the inference, that come what may, God’s people are safe. Let convulsions shake the solid earth, let the skies themselves be rent in twain, yet amid the wreck of worlds the believer shall be as secure as in the calmest hour of rest. If God cannot save his people under heaven, he will save them in heaven. If the world becomes too hot to hold them, then heaven shall be the place of their reception and their safety. Be ye then confident, when ye hear of wars, and rumours of wars. Let no agitation distress you, but be quiet from fear of evil. Whatsoever cometh upon the earth, you, beneath the broad wings of Jehovah, shall be secure. Stay yourself upon his promise; rest in his faithfulness, and bid defiance to the blackest future, for there is nothing in it direful for you. Your sole concern should be to show forth to the world the blessedness of hearkening to the voice of wisdom.

# Word Live – 7/6/19

# What is a life worth?

## Prepare

We live in a world where it seems that life is cheap. How often do we see needless killing reported on our news? How much does God value a human life?



## Bible passage: Deuteronomy 19:1–14

#### Deuteronomy 19

##### Cities of Refuge

1 When the LORD your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and houses, 2 then set aside for yourselves three cities centrally located in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess. 3 Build roads to them and divide into three parts the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that anyone who kills a man may flee there.

4 This is the rule concerning the man who kills another and flees there to save his life—one who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without malice aforethought. 5 For instance, a man may go into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he swings his ax to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit his neighbor and kill him. That man may flee to one of these cities and save his life. 6 Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without malice aforethought. 7 This is why I command you to set aside for yourselves three cities.

8 If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he promised on oath to your forefathers, and gives you the whole land he promised them, 9 because you carefully follow all these laws I command you today—to love the LORD your God and to walk always in his ways—then you are to set aside three more cities. 10 Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land, which the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance, and so that you will not be guilty of bloodshed.

11 But if a man hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him, assaults and kills him, and then flees to one of these cities, 12 the elders of his town shall send for him, bring him back from the city, and hand him over to the avenger of blood to die. 13 Show him no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you.

14 Do not move your neighbor's boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

## Explore

**God’s value on human life**

Unlike the bloodthirsty nations around them, Israel were to be a nation that reflected God’s value on human life.

**Cities of refuge**

To that end, God gave them instructions to set up three cities of refuge on the other side of the Jordan. God also told them to set up three more in the land, and if they ended up with the full land God had promised to Abraham, then they would need a further three (see vs 8–10, and also [Numbers 35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers+35&version=NIV)).

**Place of safety**

The city of refuge concept feels foreign to us, but it was fairly simple. If someone accidentally killed someone, perhaps in a work accident, then the city of refuge was a place of safety to prevent the killed person’s relative (the avenger of blood) from killing someone who was innocent of murder. God wanted murderers to be punished, but God did not want innocent people caught up in overzealous justice.

**Protected from punishment**

When we think of our situation, we are guilty and deserve to be punished, but we can run to Jesus and be protected from punishment. What’s more, since our high priest has died (see [Numbers 35:25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers+35%3A25&version=NIV)), we are living in freedom!

[Peter Mead](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

God valued your life enough for Jesus to give up his life for you. Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

## Deeper Bible study

God had set a boundary to protect life: ‘You shall not murder’ ([Deut 5:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut+5%3A17&version=NIV" \t "_blank)). What is to be done when this boundary is breached? Some foundational principles of modern legal and judicial systems are evident in today’s passage.

Because God placed a high value on human life, he decreed that anyone who intentionally takes a life must pay with his life ([Gen 9:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+9%3A6&version=NIV)). Because life is so highly valued, he also made elaborate provisions to protect the innocent (vs 3,9) ([Num 35:9–12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Num+35%3A9%E2%80%9312&version=NIV" \t "_blank)). Ancient Israel had no police force, so an ‘avenger of blood’ (vs 6,12) – the closest male relative – was responsible for safeguarding the family property, name and honour. In ancient societies, blood revenge was the norm. God-ordained respect for life is strikingly different from a sinful desire for revenge. The avenger’s actions had to be tempered by caution and directed by justice. He could not act hastily or hatefully (v 6); nor might he proceed on his own authority, but only as empowered by a duly constituted jury of elders (v 12). He could not initiate revenge, but served as an instrument of justice, responsible for executing the sentence of an impartial court, but only after a fair trial ([Num 35:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Num+35%3A12&version=NIV" \t "_blank)).

The passage makes the vital distinction between unintentional killing (involuntary or constructive manslaughter) – where the emphasis is on protecting the innocent (vs 4–10) – and premeditated or intentional killing (murder), where the focus is on ensuring that justice is done (vs 11–13). In both instances, the killer is entitled to flee to a city of refuge and is presumed innocent until proven guilty – a principle that continues to be upheld today, both as a legal right and as an internationally recognised human right. Justice demands both that due process is followed ([Deut 19:12–19; Num 35:9–34](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut+19%3A12%E2%80%9319%3B+Num+35%3A9%E2%80%9334&version=NIV" \t "_blank)) and that the guilty are punished (v 13).

Prayerfully reflect on [Genesis 9:5 and 6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+9%3A5%2C6&version=NIV), [Numbers 35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers+35&version=NIV), [Deuteronomy 19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+19&version=NIV), [Joshua 20:1–9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+20%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV) and [Romans 13:1–4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+13%3A1%E2%80%934&version=NIV). How do these passages shape your views on the issue of capital punishment?

[Tanya Ferdinandusz](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/E-F/3526095.id)

## Cities of refuge

This map will help your understanding of the opening chapters of Deuteronomy.

## https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/Deuteronomy%20map%20resized.jpg

## Poem about refuge

**Refuge**  
A refuge is a safe place, a sure place, a right place;   
a refuge is a warm place, a nice place just to be.   
A refuge is a fine place, a firm place, a true place;   
a refuge is a kind place, a good place to be free.   
  
A refuge is a strong place, a place to come for help;   
a place to welcome others, a place to be yourself.   
A place where things are shared, a place to reach out from;   
a place of understanding, a place to build upon.   
A place to face your fears, a place to grow and thrive;   
a place where love is shown, where it’s good to be alive.   
  
But where on earth to find this place of perfect bliss?   
A lifelong search would never find a refuge such as this!   
But the refuge that we seek is not in any place.   
It can’t be found on earth at all, nor in a human face.   
It’s written in our blueprint, it’s part of our design,   
that God provides the refuge... it’s divine!   
So when we feel afraid and we need a place to hide,   
the heart of God is open for us to run inside!   
  
Ruth Buckley

# Today in the Word – 7/6/19

# By My Spirit

**Read:** [**Zechariah 4:1–14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+4%3a1%e2%80%9314)

### The Gold Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees

4 Then the angel who talked with me returned and woke me up, like someone awakened from sleep. 2He asked me, “What do you see?”

I answered, “I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven channels to the lamps. 3Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.”

4I asked the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?”

5He answered, “Do you not know what these are?”

“No, my lord,” I replied.

6So he said to me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.

7“What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of ‘God bless it! God bless it!’”

8Then the word of the Lord came to me: 9“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you.

10“Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+4%3a1%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-22933a)] in the hand of Zerubbabel?”

11Then I asked the angel, “What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?”

12Again I asked him, “What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?”

13He replied, “Do you not know what these are?”

“No, my lord,” I said.

14So he said, “These are the two who are anointed to[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+4%3a1%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-22937b)] serve the Lord of all the earth.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Zechariah 4:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+4%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-22933) Or the plumb line
2. [Zechariah 4:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+4%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-22937) Or two who bring oil and

In April, a fire ravaged the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris. The Gothic cathedral, which began construction in 1163, took nearly 300 years to be complete. Compared to this, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem might seem relatively brief. However, discouragement can make even the most worthwhile effort seem to drag.

After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Galatians 3:3

Rebuilding the temple began in 536 BC. When the foundation for the new temple was laid, some of the returned exiles who could still remember Solomon’s temple viewed it with contempt. They considered the dimensions of this new project to be “nothing” compared to the old temple (Hag. 2:3). It was delayed for fourteen years due to opposition from Gentiles who lived in the region.

Zechariah’s fifth vision may have been aimed at this discouragement. Zechariah saw a vision of a solid gold candlestick and two olive trees. The candlestick or lampstand was similar to the seven-branched lampstand in the tabernacle. It likely represented the rebuilding of the temple. The two olive trees probably symbolized those who led the rebuilding effort, Zerubbabel and Joshua. The angel’s interpretation began with encouragement to Zerubbabel and then identified the two olive trees as “the two who are anointed to serve the LORD of all the earth” (Zech. 4:14).

The angel’s exhortation to Zerubbabel seems to be pointed at those who complained that the new temple was “nothing” compared to Solomon’s: “Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven eyes of the LORD that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel?” (v. 10). Two witnesses also appear in Revelation 11:3–12, and it may be to them that the prophecy ultimately points.

### Apply the Word

God’s great building project was not limited to Zerubbabel’s temple. He continues to build the church today (Matt. 16:18). We may feel that our contribution to the church amounts to nothing. But we should not underestimate what God’s Spirit can do through our willingness. Consider how God can use you to serve His people in the body of Christ.

### Pray with Us

Please pray for the Event Marketing and Management team: Mary Chapman Deas, Anna Gonzalez, Daniel Fleming, Lauren Cuevas, and Scott Johnson. Their ministry helps create a warm, hospitable environment for hundreds of visitors.

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/6/19

# Starting Now

**Read:** [**1 Peter 4:7–11**](https://www.odb.org/2019/07/06/starting-now/)

7The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. 8Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. 11If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Love each other deeply. [1 Peter 4:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+4%3A8)

When my oldest sister’s biopsy revealed cancer in late February 2017, I remarked to friends, “I need to spend as much time with Carolyn as possible—starting now.” Some told me my feelings were an overreaction to the news. But she died within ten months. And even though I had spent hours with her, when we love someone there’s never enough time for our hearts to love enough.

The apostle Peter called Jesus’s followers in the early church to “love each other deeply” (1 Peter 4:8). They were suffering under persecution and needed the love of their brothers and sisters in their Christian community more than ever. Because God had poured His own love into their hearts, they would then want to love others in return. Their love would be expressed through praying, offering gracious hospitality, and gentle and truthful conversation—all in the strength God provided (vv. 9–11). Through His grace, God had gifted them to sacrificially serve each other for His good purposes. So that “in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ” (v. 11). This is God’s powerful plan that accomplishes His will through us.

We need others and they need us. Let’s use whatever time or resources we have received from God to love—starting now.

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

#### Reflect & Pray

How have others loved you well? What have you received from God that you might use to serve someone today?

There is nothing small in the service of God. Francis de Sales

Peter’s letter is intriguing in part because of its intended audience. First Peter 1:1 says he was writing to “exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.” These were the five Roman provinces of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). This is interesting because Peter’s ministry was primarily to the Jews, and Paul was the apostle to the gentiles (Galatians 2:9). As such, much of Paul’s missionary activity took the gospel to the very places to which Peter now wrote. These same regions of Asia Minor had previously received a letter from Paul (Galatians 1:1–2). This shows that, although having distinct missions, Paul and Peter had a shared concern for the churches of Galatia, perhaps because the largely gentile congregations there had been infused with Jewish exiles who had fled Jerusalem—forming truly multi-ethnic churches.

To learn more about how geography affects our understanding of the Bible visit [christianuniversity.org/NT110](https://christianuniversity.org/NT110).

# God Calling – 7/6/19

# Riches

Never let yourselves think "we cannot afford this," or "shall never be able to do that."  Say "the supply for it is not here yet, but it will come if we should have it.  It will surely come."

Persevere in saying that and gradually a feeling of being plentifully supplied and of being surrounded by riches will possess you.  That feeling is your faith claiming My Supply, and according to your faith it shall be unto you.

But it is not the faith expressed in moments of prayer and exaltation I look for but the faith that lays immediately to rest the doubts of the day as they arise, that attacks and conquers the sense of limitation.

"Ask and ye shall receive."

Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.  Psalm 112:3

# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/7/19

# All Efforts of Worth and Excellence Are Difficult



Enter by the narrow gate….Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life…. —[Matthew 7:13-14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+7%3A13-14)

If we are going to live as disciples of Jesus, we have to remember that all efforts of worth and excellence are difficult.  The Christian life is gloriously difficult, but its difficulty does not make us faint and cave in— it stirs us up to overcome.  Do we appreciate the miraculous salvation of Jesus Christ enough to be our utmost for His highest— our best for His glory?

God saves people by His sovereign grace through the atonement of Jesus, and “it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” ([Philippians 2:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2:13)). But we have to “work out” that salvation in our everyday, practical living (Philippians 2:12). If we will only start on the basis of His redemption to do what He commands, then we will find that we can do it. If we fail, it is because we have not yet put into practice what God has placed within us. But a crisis will reveal whether or not we have been putting it into practice. If we will obey the Spirit of God and practice in our physical life what God has placed within us by His Spirit, then when a crisis does come we will find that our own nature, as well as the grace of God, will stand by us.

Thank God that He does give us difficult things to do! His salvation is a joyous thing, but it is also something that requires bravery, courage, and holiness. It tests us for all we are worth. Jesus is “bringing many sons to glory” ([Hebrews 2:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+2:10)), and God will not shield us from the requirements of sonship. God’s grace produces men and women with a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ, not pampered, spoiled weaklings. It takes a tremendous amount of discipline to live the worthy and excellent life of a disciple of Jesus in the realities of life. And it is always necessary for us to make an effort to live a life of worth and excellence.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Jesus Christ reveals, not an embarrassed God, not a confused God, not a God who stands apart from the problems, but One who stands in the thick of the whole thing with man.  Disciples Indeed, 388 L

# CCEL – 7/7/19

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.—[MATT. 4:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.4.html" \l "Matt.4.1)

In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.—We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.—My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

[Heb. 5:7-9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.5.html" \l "Heb.5.7). -[Heb. 4:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.4.html" \l "Heb.4.15).[I Cor. 10:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.10.html" \l "iCor.10.13). -[II Cor. 12:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.12.html" \l "iiCor.12.9).

“Brethren, pray for us.” **[1 Thessalonians 5:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.5.html" \l "iThess.5.25)**

This one morning in the year we reserved to refresh the reader’s memory upon the subject of prayer for ministers, and we do most earnestly implore every Christian household to grant the fervent request of the text first uttered by an apostle and now repeated by us. Brethren, our work is solemnly momentous, involving weal or woe to thousands; we treat with souls for God on eternal business, and our word is either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. A very heavy responsibility rests upon us, and it will be no small mercy if at the last we be found clear of the blood of all men. As officers in Christ’s army, we are the especial mark of the enmity of men and devils; they watch for our halting, and labour to take us by the heels. Our sacred calling involves us in temptations from which you are exempt, above all it too often draws us away from our personal enjoyment of truth into a ministerial and official consideration of it. We meet with many knotty cases, and our wits are at a non plus; we observe very sad backslidings, and our hearts are wounded; we see millions perishing, and our spirits sink. We wish to profit you by our preaching; we desire to be blest to your children; we long to be useful both to saints and sinners; therefore, dear friends, intercede for us with our God. Miserable men are we if we miss the aid of your prayers, but happy are we if we live in your supplications. You do not look to us but to our Master for spiritual blessings, and yet how many times has He given those blessings through His ministers; ask then, again and again, that we may be the earthen vessels into which the Lord may put the treasure of the gospel. We, the whole company of missionaries, ministers, city missionaries, and students, do in the name of Jesus beseech you

“Brethren, pray for us.”

# Word Live – 7/7/19

# What we really need

## Prepare

We naturally ask God to take away our problems. But is that what we really need?



## Bible passage: Psalm 59

##### For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam . When Saul had sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him.

1 Deliver me from my enemies, O God;   
       protect me from those who rise up against me.

2 Deliver me from evildoers   
       and save me from bloodthirsty men.

3 See how they lie in wait for me!   
       Fierce men conspire against me   
       for no offense or sin of mine, O LORD.

4 I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me.   
       Arise to help me; look on my plight!

5 O LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel,   
       rouse yourself to punish all the nations;   
       show no mercy to wicked traitors.   
       Selah

6 They return at evening,   
       snarling like dogs,   
       and prowl about the city.

7 See what they spew from their mouths—   
       they spew out swords from their lips,   
       and they say, "Who can hear us?"

8 But you, O LORD, laugh at them;   
       you scoff at all those nations.

9 O my Strength, I watch for you;   
       you, O God, are my fortress, 10 my loving God.   
       God will go before me   
       and will let me gloat over those who slander me.

11 But do not kill them, O Lord our shield,   
       or my people will forget.   
       In your might make them wander about,   
       and bring them down.

12 For the sins of their mouths,   
       for the words of their lips,   
       let them be caught in their pride.   
       For the curses and lies they utter,

13 consume them in wrath,   
       consume them till they are no more.   
       Then it will be known to the ends of the earth   
       that God rules over Jacob.   
       Selah

14 They return at evening,   
       snarling like dogs,   
       and prowl about the city.

15 They wander about for food   
       and howl if not satisfied.

16 But I will sing of your strength,   
       in the morning I will sing of your love;   
       for you are my fortress,   
       my refuge in times of trouble.

17 O my Strength, I sing praise to you;   
       you, O God, are my fortress, my loving God.

## Explore

**Cry for deliverance**

David was in a tight spot! Saul had sent men to besiege David’s house and to kill him (see [1 Samuel 19:8–11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+19%3A8%E2%80%9311&version=NIV)). This psalm is his cry for God’s deliverance. Notice he doesn’t just ask for God to fix the situation, he also asks for God to be his fortress (see vs 1,9,16,17). A fortress is a high and secure place to hide from a storm. Like David, we don’t just need solutions, we need God. And what a God we have!

**Looking to God**

In the first ten verses David describes his predicament, and then looks to God. He does this twice, returning to his need for the God who is so strong he can laugh at his enemies and be a fortress for those who trust in him. Then David calls on God to demonstrate his strength against these enemies (vs 11–13). His desire is not for the people to know who David is, but to know who this God is who is in charge.

**Sing in the face of adversity**

The psalm concludes in verses 14 to 17 with another description of his enemies returning like dogs in the evening. They howl for food, but David will sing of God’s strength, then again in the morning he will sing of God’s love. God is strong, God is loving, God is our fortress, and so we too can sing in the face of adversity.

[Peter Mead](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Pray that God would stir in you a song to sing as you face whatever difficulty is before you today.

## Deeper Bible study

‘A man’s home is his castle’ is a proverbial expression signifying both privacy and protection. It’s also a legal maxim, embedded in English case law. The jurist William Blackstone wrote, ‘For every man’s house is looked upon by the law to be his castle of defence and asylum, wherein he should suffer no violence.’1

The superscription tells us the occasion of this psalm: ‘When Saul had sent men to watch David’s house in order to kill him.’ The full story is recorded in 1 Samuel 19:11–17. Clearly, David’s home was not his castle: Saul had turned against him; evil-doers were after his blood, lying in wait for him, conspiring against him (vs 1–3). The safety of his home was severely compromised. However perilous the situation, however powerful the adversary, however painful the attacks (v 7), David relies on a safe haven that can never be compromised – the mighty ‘fortress’ that is God himself (vs 1,9,16,17). When under attack, what is the fortress to which you flee? Your well-honed skills? The wealth you have amassed? Influential contacts? Or the Lord Almighty?

‘The longing to see God acknowledged is a mark of the true servant.’2 David’s youthful challenge to the Philistines ([1 Sam 17:45](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Sam+17%3A45&version=NIV)) finds an echo in his cry, ‘You, Lord God Almighty, you who are the God of Israel’ (v 5). This is no personal battle; there is more at stake than David’s life, for this is about God’s honour and glory (v 13b). Nor is David simply trying to convince himself that things aren’t as black as they seem. Refusing to be consumed by fear, David watches for a faithful God to act (v 9). Despite the prowling of enemies by evening (v 14), he affirms that the morning will find him singing praises to God for his love and protection (v 16).

Memorise a Scripture verse that you can repeat in times of fear as a reminder that God is your mighty and impenetrable fortress.

1 William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Law of England

2 Derek Kidner, Psalms 1–72, IVP, 1973, p213

[Tanya Ferdinandusz](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/E-F/3526095.id)

## Fortress



Use this image as a reminder that you are safe when God is your fortress.

# Today in the Word – 7/7/19

# The Importance of Honesty

**Read:** [**Zechariah 5:1–4**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+5%3a1%e2%80%934)

### The Flying Scroll

5 I looked again, and there before me was a flying scroll.

2He asked me, “What do you see?”

I answered, “I see a flying scroll, twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+5%3a1%e2%80%934" \l "fen-NIV-22939a" \o "See footnote a)]”

3And he said to me, “This is the curse that is going out over the whole land; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according to what it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished. 4The Lord Almighty declares, ‘I will send it out, and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of anyone who swears falsely by my name. It will remain in that house and destroy it completely, both its timbers and its stones.’”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Zechariah 5:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+5%3a1%e2%80%934#en-NIV-22939) That is, about 30 feet long and 15 feet wide or about 9 meters long and 4.5 meters wide

Most people don’t consider themselves to be dishonest. Yet, researchers found that workplace theft is surprisingly common. One survey released in 2013 revealed that most employees stole from the retail and service companies that employed them. Some of those thefts might not be what you’d expect. For example, many employees claimed they worked longer than they actually did. Others stole supplies. Theft can even be a problem for those who claim to be followers of Jesus. The apostle Paul felt it necessary to remind Ephesian believers that they must not steal (Eph. 4:28).

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer. Ephesians 4:28

Dishonesty was also a problem in Zechariah’s day. The sixth vision warned of impending judgment. Zechariah saw a huge scroll which displayed several unusual features. For one thing, instead of being rolled up and resting on a table, it was unrolled and floating in mid-air. The physical dimensions of the scroll were unexpectedly large. The scroll had writing on two sides (v. 3). One side condemned those who stole and the other side condemned those who gave false testimony. Both sins were included in the Ten Commandments, suggesting the scroll could represent the Law as a whole.

The threat of banishment was a kind of promise. Zechariah’s prophecy not only served as a warning to those who ignored God’s Law but also pictured a time when those who persist in sin would be excluded from the land. The God of grace who invites us to come back to Him in repentance is also a God of justice. Those who refuse His grace opt for judgment. Sin is never a purely private matter. It always has an effect on the community as a whole (v. 3).

### Apply the Word

Sometimes we are too lenient with ourselves. Do not let God’s grace make you complacent about your own sin. Take a moment to ask God to reveal areas in your life that need change. Christ’s blood has purchased forgiveness for you. Confess your sins today, and ask the Holy Spirit to give you power over them.

### Pray with Us

Would you support in prayer Moody’s senior vice president of Media, Greg Thornton? Today, ask the Lord to bless Greg and the teams he leads at our media ministries: Moody Radio and Moody Publishers.

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/7/19

# God Looms Larger

**Read:** [**1 Samuel 17:41–50**](https://www.odb.org/2019/07/07/god-looms-larger/)

41Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. 42He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. 43He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44“Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!”

45David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

48As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

50So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty. [1 Samuel 17:45](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+17%3A45)

Giles Kelmanson, a South African game ranger, described the incredible scene: two honey badgers battling a pride of six lions. Although outnumbered, the honey badgers refused to back down from ferocious predators ten times their size. The lions thought the kill would be simple, but video footage shows the badgers walking away with something like a swagger.

David and Goliath offer an even more improbable story. Young, inexperienced David confronted the fierce Philistine Goliath. Towering above his young combatant, Goliath possessed brute strength and unrivaled weaponry—bronze armor and a lethal, razor-edged javelin (1 Samuel 17:5–6). David, a fledgling shepherd, carried only a slingshot when he arrived at the battlefield with bread and cheeses for his brothers (vv. 17–18).

Goliath challenged Israel to engage in battle, but no one was willing to fight. King Saul and “all the Israelites were . . . terrified” (v. 11). Imagine the shock when David stepped into the fray. What gave him the courage none of Israel’s hardened warriors possessed? For most, Goliath dominated their vision. David, however, saw God. “The Lord will deliver [Goliath] into my hands,” he insisted (v. 46). While everyone else believed Goliath controlled the story, he believed God loomed larger. And, with a single stone to the giant’s forehead, David’s faith proved true.

We’re tempted to believe that “Goliath” (our troubles) directs the story. God is larger, however. He dominates the story of our lives.

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

#### Reflect & Pray

What concerns threaten to overwhelm you these days? How does God’s reality, the fact that He’s larger, transform your perspective?

#### Insight

The Philistines played a large part in Israelite history. Both Abraham and Isaac made treaties with Philistine kings (see Genesis 21 and 26). They oppressed the Israelites in the promised land and Samson delivered them (Judges 13–16). It was David’s defeat of Goliath (1 Samuel 17) that began the final delivery of Israel from Philistine oppression.

# God Calling – 7/7/19

# Painful Preparation

Help and peace and joy are here.  Your courage will be rewarded.

Painful as this time is you will both one day see the reason of it, and see too that it was not cruel testing, but tender preparation for the wonderful life-work you are both to do.

Try to realize that your own prayers are being most wonderfully answered. Answered in a way that seems painful to you, but that just now is the only way.

Success in the temporal world would not satisfy you.

Great success, in both temporal and spiritual worlds, awaits you.

I know you will see this had to be.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, ... But rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.  1 Peter 4:12

# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/8/19

# Will To Be Faithful



…choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve… —[Joshua 24:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Joshua+24%3A15)

A person’s will is embodied in the actions of the whole person. I cannot give up my will— I must exercise it, putting it into action. I must will to obey, and I must will to receive God’s Spirit. When God gives me a vision of truth, there is never a question of what He will do, but only of what I will do. The Lord has been placing in front of each of us some big proposals and plans. The best thing to do is to remember what you did before when you were touched by God. Recall the moment when you were saved, or first recognized Jesus, or realized some truth. It was easy then to yield your allegiance to God. Immediately recall those moments each time the Spirit of God brings some new proposal before you.

“…choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve….” Your choice must be a deliberate determination— it is not something into which you will automatically drift. And everything else in your life will be held in temporary suspension until you make a decision. The proposal is between you and God— do not “confer with flesh and blood” about it ([Galatians 1:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+1:16)). With every new proposal, the people around us seem to become more and more isolated, and that is where the tension develops. God allows the opinion of His other saints to matter to you, and yet you become less and less certain that others really understand the step you are taking. You have no business trying to find out where God is leading— the only thing God will explain to you is Himself.

Openly declare to Him, “I will be faithful.” But remember that as soon as you choose to be faithful to Jesus Christ, “You are witnesses against yourselves…” ([Joshua 24:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+24:22)). Don’t consult with other Christians, but simply and freely declare before Him, “I will serve You.” Will to be faithful— and give other people credit for being faithful too.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The fiery furnaces are there by God’s direct permission. It is misleading to imagine that we are developed in spite of our circumstances; we are developed because of them. It is mastery in circumstances that is needed, not mastery over them. The Love of God—The Message of Invincible Consolation, 674 R

# CCEL – 7/8/19

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—[I JOHN 1:9.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.1.html" \l "iJohn.1.9)

I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.—I have blotted out as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.—Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.—God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.—That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.—They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood.

[Psa. 51:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.51.html" \l "Ps.51.3).[Luke 15:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.15.html" \l "Luke.15.20). -[Isa. 44:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.44.html" \l "Isa.44.22). -[I John 2:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.12). -[Eph. 4:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.4.html" \l "Eph.4.32). -[Rom. 3:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.3.html" \l "Rom.3.26).[Eze. 36:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ezek.36.html" \l "Ezek.36.25). -[Rev. 3:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.3.html" \l "Rev.3.4).[I John 5:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.5.html" \l "iJohn.5.6).

“Tell me I pray thee wherein thy great strength lieth.” **[Judges 16:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Judg.16.html" \l "Judg.16.6)**

Where lies the secret strength of faith? It lies in the food it feeds on; for faith studies what the promise is—an emanation of divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God; and faith says, “My God could not have given this promise, except from love and grace; therefore it is quite certain his Word will be fulfilled.” Then faith thinketh, “Who gave this promise?” It considereth not so much its greatness, as, “Who is the author of it?” She remembers that it is God who cannot lie—God omnipotent, God immutable; and therefore concludeth that the promise must be fulfilled; and forward she advances in this firm conviction. She remembereth, why the promise was given,—namely, for God’s glory, and she feels perfectly sure that God’s glory is safe, that he will never stain his own escutcheon, nor mar the lustre of his own crown; and therefore the promise must and will stand. Then faith also considereth the amazing work of Christ as being a clear proof of the Father’s intention to fulfil his word. “He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Moreover faith looks back upon the past, for her battles have strengthened her, and her victories have given her courage. She remembers that God never has failed her; nay, that he never did once fail any of his children. She recollecteth times of great peril, when deliverance came; hours of awful need, when as her day her strength was found, and she cries, “No, I never will be led to think that he can change and leave his servant now. Hitherto the Lord hath helped me, and he will help me still.” Thus faith views each promise in its connection with the promise-giver, and, because she does so, can with assurance say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!”

# Word Live – 7/8/19

# Renewing the vows

## Prepare

With all the laws and covenant stipulations, it might seem as if Israel’s relationship to God was strictly contractual. Actually, the relationship God desired was something entirely more special…



## Bible passage: Deuteronomy 29:1–29

##### Renewal of the Covenant

1 These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.

2 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:   
      Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. 3 With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great wonders. 4 But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. 5 During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. 6 You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God.

7 When you reached this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out to fight against us, but we defeated them. 8 We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

9 Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. 10 All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, 11 together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. 12 You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, 13 to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 14 I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you 15 who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here today.

16 You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. 17 You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. 18 Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

19 When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. 20 The LORD will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. 21 The LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.

22 Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it. 23 The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. 24 All the nations will ask: "Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?"

25 And the answer will be: "It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. 26 They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. 27 Therefore the LORD's anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. 28 In furious anger and in great wrath the LORD uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now."

29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

## Explore

**Covenant renewal**

Israel had heard Moses’ sermons in preparation for entering the Promised Land. Now came the moment of covenant renewal – a formal ceremony that may have felt like a married couple renewing their vows. What had been formally ratified at Horeb (Mount Sinai) was now being reiterated before they entered into the Promised Land. This was not a new covenant, but the same one reviewed and restated.

**Simple arrangement**

Moses began by reviewing God’s kindness to Israel in the wilderness (vs 1–8). They may not have grasped the significance of it all, but they had seen God work for them. Now the arrangement was simple – they were to obey faithfully the law that God had given them, because disobedience would result in curses and consequences (see vs 16–29).

**United with God**

The heart of the passage reflects a frequently recurring theme of the Bible. God’s great plan is to establish a covenant that would bind the people to him as his people, and God to them as their God (see v 13). While the details of this particular covenant seem foreign to us, the idea of being united with God in a marital covenant is actually our reality today (see [Ephesians 5:31,32](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+5%3A31%2C32&version=NIV)).

[Peter Mead](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

What motivates your heartfelt obedience more, fear of punishment alone, or also having the privilege of being ‘married’ to the one who gave his life for you?

## Deeper Bible study

In his speech, ‘A Time for Choosing’, former US president Ronald Reagan warned, ‘Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in our bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.’

A ‘covenant’ (the word recurs nine times) is an agreement which expresses the relationship between God and his people. Although Moses refers to terms of a covenant ‘in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb’ (v 1, italics added), this doesn’t mean that God has abandoned his covenant, for he remains committed to it for all generations (v 15). However, inclusion among the covenant people is never a foregone conclusion; in every generation, it remains an offer which must be accepted, an invitation which must be embraced. The people now stand in God’s presence to exercise their franchise (vs 10–14). As at Eden, the freedom to say ‘no’ to God is part of the tremendous dignity, but also the tragedy, of being human (v 18). The invitation is extended to everyone (vs 10,11), but each individual may RSVP as they choose. The decision must not be delayed – it must be made ‘today’ (vs 10,15,18).

God has no grandchildren! Moses has repeatedly pleaded for faithful transmission of his message ([Deut 4:9; 6:7; 11:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut+4%3A9%3B+6%3A7%3B+11%3A19&version=NIV" \t "_blank)) so that the next generation, too, may freely choose to be confirmed as part of God’s covenant people (v 13) and, thereby, ‘prosper’ (v 9). In every generation, that choice continues, as do its consequences (vs 19–28). ‘Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God’ ([John 1:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A12&version=NIV)).

What do you need to teach the children of today, in order that they might become God’s children?

[Tanya Ferdinandusz](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/E-F/3526095.id)

## Ancient political treaties

**Political treaties in the Ancient Near East**   
  
The concept of a covenant was well known in the political world of the Ancient Near East. It was the typical way in which two tribes or nations would establish a working relationship between themselves.  
   
Normally offered by the more powerful group, it offered an alliance that provided protection in return for loyalty, and often payment of appropriate taxes as well.   
  
As well as the concept being widespread, so was the structure and content of a covenant. They all follow the same pattern. Covenants from Babylon, Assyria, Ugarit and Egypt are identical, bar the details specific to the parties involved. We find this pattern repeated in the biblical covenants.   
  
There were some changes to the content as the centuries passed from the second millennium to the first. The Israelites were obviously very familiar with the idea though.   
  
**Deuteronomy**   
  
Scholars have often noted that the whole of Deuteronomy follows the classic structure of a political covenant document. [Chapters 29 and 30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%2029:1%20-%2030:20;&version=72;) contain elements from it. Verses 2–8 are a recitation of the recent history that the two parties – God and the people – have shared. Verses 19–29 contain threats and curses should the people fail to adhere to the covenant. Both are standard parts of the political treaty, here adapted by God for use as an agreement with his people.

## Renew your covenant

Think what it means to be ‘children of God’ ([1 John 3:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%203:1;&version=72;)). How are others meant to see him in us? Our thoughts, words, actions and lifestyle should reflect God.  
  
Yet we are fallible, fallen people, though we are redeemed. Ask God to show you the areas where you are weak. Take encouragement from God’s promise never to leave you ([Matthew 28:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028:20;&version=72;)) and to provide you with comfort and guidance ([John 15:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2015:26;&version=72;)).  
  
Sit with God and be open to receiving his Spirit. In your mind, lift up your failings and struggles, offering God the pain and frustration these have brought to you. He will not refuse to accept them in his mercy.   
  
Think over times when God has helped, comforted, healed or strengthened you, and rejoice. Think about God’s part of the covenant. For obedient followers, he offers friendship, forgiveness and eternity. Our struggles are put into perspective – especially if we consider the price Jesus paid so that we might know peace ([Colossians 1:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%201:20;&version=72;)).   
  
Sit with God, offering him your best – talents, gifts, skills and efforts. Thank him for accepting what you have entrusted to him, offering him prayers of gratefulness for the abundant generosity he has shown you by choosing to make a covenant with you.   
  
Pray that he will give you a renewed sense of his call and provision and of his love for you. When you’re ready, respond by telling him about the ways you love him.   
  
Sarah Bingham

# Today in the Word – 7/8/19

# The Danger of Harboring Sin

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

### The Woman in a Basket

5Then the angel who was speaking to me came forward and said to me, “Look up and see what is appearing.”

6I asked, “What is it?”

He replied, “It is a basket.” And he added, “This is the iniquity[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+5%3a5%e2%80%9311#fen-NIV-22943a)] of the people throughout the land.”

7Then the cover of lead was raised, and there in the basket sat a woman! 8He said, “This is wickedness,” and he pushed her back into the basket and pushed its lead cover down on it.

9Then I looked up—and there before me were two women, with the wind in their wings! They had wings like those of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between heaven and earth.

10“Where are they taking the basket?” I asked the angel who was speaking to me.

11He replied, “To the country of Babylonia[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+5%3a5%e2%80%9311#fen-NIV-22948b)] to build a house for it. When the house is ready, the basket will be set there in its place.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Zechariah 5:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+5%3a5%e2%80%9311#en-NIV-22943) Or appearance
2. [Zechariah 5:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+5%3a5%e2%80%9311#en-NIV-22948) Hebrew Shinar

It seems that most dieters underestimate their weight. The opposite happens with people who suffer from anorexia. They tend to see themselves as heavier than they are. Something similar happens when it comes to how we view our own sin. Sometimes we underestimate our sinfulness. We downplay or excuse our sinful actions, concluding that they are not really as bad as they actually are. Or we overestimate our righteousness, incorrectly concluding that the good things we have done far offset the bad.

I know your deeds. Revelation 3:15

The vision of the flying scroll gave way to the even stranger sight of a woman stuffed into an ephah, which was a basket or barrel normally used for measuring grain. Zechariah’s seventh vision reinforced the message of the floating scroll. As shown throughout Scripture, God has promised to deal with sin. The angel explained that the woman represented “the iniquity of the people throughout the land” (v. 6). After being stuffed down into the basket, the woman was carried off by two winged creatures to Babylonia.

Were these figures angels or something else? The fact that they had wings like a stork seems to identify them with iniquity. In the Law of Moses, storks were listed among the “detestable” animals that could not be eaten (Lev. 11:13, 19). Their actions seem to preserve iniquity rather than eliminate its presence. They transported the basket to “the country of Babylonia” (v. 11). The Hebrew text says they took the basket to Shinar, the original location of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9). The tower was an act of rebellion against God, an example of worldliness and false worship. The “house” mentioned in today’s passage (v. 11) may be a place of worship.

### Apply the Word

When we harbor sin, it can take hold in our lives. We may even nurture sin by giving it a special, secretive place in our lives. Every sin is a kind of false worship. When we yield to sin, we give preference to it over God. Once again, ask God to bring your sins to mind, then confess those sins to Him.

### Pray with Us

Your prayers will be an encouragement to the staff of WKES, Moody Radio’s station in Florida: Andrew Leuthold. John Blok, Kate Bruington, Kurt Goff, and Pierre Chestang. May God’s love always shine through their programs!

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/8/19

# Sovereign Intervention

**Read:** [**Exodus 3:1–9**](https://www.odb.org/2019/07/08/sovereign-intervention/)

### Moses and the Burning Bush

3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

4When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

5“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” 6Then he said, “I am the God of your father,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+3%3A1%E2%80%939" \l "fen-NIV-1586a" \o "See footnote a)] the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

7The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Exodus 3:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+3%3A1%E2%80%939#en-NIV-1586) Masoretic Text; Samaritan Pentateuch (see Acts 7:32) fathers

God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. [Exodus 2:25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+2%3A25)

Barbara grew up under the care of the British government in the 1960s, but when she turned sixteen, she and her newborn son, Simon, became homeless. The state was no longer obligated to provide for her at that age. Barbara wrote to the Queen of England for help and received a response! The Queen compassionately arranged for Barbara to be given a house of her own.

The Queen of England had the right resources to help Barbara, and her compassionate assistance can be seen as a small picture of God’s help. The King of heaven knows all of our needs and sovereignly works out His plans in our lives. As He does, however, He longs for us to come to Him—sharing our needs and other concerns—as part of our loving relationship with Him.

The Israelites brought their need for deliverance to God. They were suffering under the burden of Egyptian slavery and cried out for help. He heard them and remembered His promise: “God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them” (Exodus 2:25). He instructed Moses to bring liberty to His people and declared that He would once again release them “into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (3:8).

Our King loves it when we come to Him! He wisely provides what we need, not necessarily what we want. Let’s rest in His sovereign, loving provision.

By [Ruth O’Reilly-Smith](https://odb.org/author/oreillysmith/)

#### Reflect & Pray

Why is it important for us to bring our needs to God in prayer? How can you learn to rest in God’s provision—whatever that may be?

Loving God, thank You that I can bring my needs to You. Help me to be content in whatever paths and provisions You choose.

#### Insight

When God introduced Himself to Moses from a burning bush, the bush didn’t burn up (Exodus 3:2). Later Moses would speak of the same God as a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24). Through both Testaments, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus uses the image of fire to reveal His resolve to consume what’s worthless—while lovingly protecting, preserving, and perfecting what’s good (1 Corinthians 3:11–15).

# God Calling – 7/8/19

# My Secret

You are being guided but remember that I said "I will guide thee with Mine Eye."

And My Eye is My set purpose -- My Will.

To guide with My Will is to bring all your desires into one-ness with My Will, My desires.

To make My Will your only will.  Then My Will guides you.

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.  John 4:34