# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/9/21

# Turning Back or Walking with Jesus?



Do you also want to go away? —[John 6:67](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+6%3A67)

What a penetrating question! Our Lord’s words often hit home for us when He speaks in the simplest way. In spite of the fact that we know who Jesus is, He asks, “Do you also want to go away?” We must continually maintain an adventurous attitude toward Him, despite any potential personal risk.

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” ([John 6:66](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:66)). They turned back from walking with Jesus; not into sin, but away from Him. Many people today are pouring their lives out and working for Jesus Christ, but are not really walking with Him. One thing God constantly requires of us is a oneness with Jesus Christ. After being set apart through sanctification, we should discipline our lives spiritually to maintain this intimate oneness. When God gives you a clear determination of His will for you, all your striving to maintain that relationship by some particular method is completely unnecessary. All that is required is to live a natural life of absolute dependence on Jesus Christ. Never try to live your life with God in any other way than His way. And His way means absolute devotion to Him. Showing no concern for the uncertainties that lie ahead is the secret of walking with Jesus.

Peter saw in Jesus only someone who could minister salvation to him and to the world. But our Lord wants us to be fellow laborers with Him.

In [John 6:70](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:70) Jesus lovingly reminded Peter that he was chosen to go with Him. And each of us must answer this question for ourselves and no one else: “Do you also want to go away?”

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

God engineers circumstances to see what we will do. Will we be the children of our Father in heaven, or will we go back again to the meaner, common-sense attitude? Will we stake all and stand true to Him? “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” The crown of life means I shall see that my Lord has got the victory after all, even in me.  The Highest Good—The Pilgrim’s Song Book, 530 L

# CCEL – 3/9/21

The living God giveth us richly all things to enjoy.—[I TIM. 6:17.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.6.html" \l "iTim.6.17)

Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; . . . then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God: . . . for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.—They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them—There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

[Deut. 8:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.11),[14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.14),[18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.18).[Psa. 127:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.127.html" \l "Ps.127.1). -[Psa. 44:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.44.html" \l "Ps.44.3). -[Psa. 4:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.4.html" \l "Ps.4.6).

“Yea, he is altogether lovely.” [Song of Solomon 5:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.5.html" \l "Song.5.16)

The superlative beauty of Jesus is all-attracting; it is not so much to be admired as to be loved. He is more than pleasant and fair, he is lovely. Surely the people of God can fully justify the use of this golden word, for he is the object of their warmest love, a love founded on the intrinsic excellence of his person, the complete perfection of his charms. Look, O disciples of Jesus, to your Master’s lips, and say, “Are they not most sweet?” Do not his words cause your hearts to burn within you as he talks with you by the way? Ye worshippers of Immanuel, look up to his head of much fine gold, and tell me, are not his thoughts precious unto you? Is not your adoration sweetened with affection as ye humbly bow before that countenance which is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars? Is there not a charm in his every feature, and is not his whole person fragrant with such a savour of his good ointments, that therefore the virgins love him? Is there one member of his glorious body which is not attractive?—one portion of his person which is not a fresh lodestone to our souls?—one office which is not a strong cord to bind your heart? Our love is not as a seal set upon his heart of love alone; it is fastened upon his arm of power also; nor is there a single part of him upon which it does not fix itself. We anoint his whole person with the sweet spikenard of our fervent love. His whole life we would imitate; his whole character we would transcribe. In all other beings we see some lack, in him there is all perfection. The best even of his favoured saints have had blots upon their garments and wrinkles upon their brows; he is nothing but loveliness. All earthly suns have their spots: the fair world itself hath its wilderness; we cannot love the whole of the most lovely thing; but Christ Jesus is gold without alloy-light without darkness—glory without cloud—“Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

# Word Live – 3/9/21

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

# Scripture Union – 3/9/21

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

# Today in the Word – 3/9/21

# Sarai - The Covenant Confirmed

**Read:** [**Genesis 17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17)

### **The Covenant of Circumcision**

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17#fen-NIV-399a)]; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. 2Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

3Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5No longer will you be called Abram[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17#fen-NIV-403b)]; your name will be Abraham,[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17" \l "fen-NIV-403c" \o "See footnote c)] for I have made you a father of many nations. 6I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

9Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. 10This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. 12For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. 13Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. 14Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

15God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

17Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” 18And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”

19Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac.[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17" \l "fen-NIV-417d" \o "See footnote d)] I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. 21But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.” 22When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

23On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. 24Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, 25and his son Ishmael was thirteen; 26Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very day. 27And every male in Abraham’s household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Genesis 17:1](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17#en-NIV-399) Hebrew El-Shaddai
2. [Genesis 17:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17#en-NIV-403) Abram means exalted father.
3. [Genesis 17:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17#en-NIV-403) Abraham probably means father of many.
4. [Genesis 17:19](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17#en-NIV-417) Isaac means he laughs.

A vow renewal ceremony has become an increasingly popular way for couples to recommit to one another and reclaim their marital promises. They often use new rings as a tangible sign of their ongoing devotion. In Genesis 17, Abram was 99 years old, and his son Ishmael was 13. Abram had spent over a decade, assuming that Ishmael was his covenant son and undoubtedly raising him as such. Then God appeared in a conversation that changed everything.

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:29

God began by claiming His identity as “God Almighty” (v. 1). Then He instructed Abram to “walk before [Him] faithfully and be blameless” (v. 1). Finally, He explained the purpose of His visit: to confirm His covenant. Abram fell face down on the ground, as God laid out in more detail what this covenant would entail: Abram would be the father of many nations; this covenant would be everlasting; the whole land of Canaan would be theirs; Abram and his male descendants would be circumcised as a physical mark and sign of submission; Sarai would be the one to bear Abram the son of the covenant; and both Abram and Sarai would receive new names.

Don’t forget that, by this time, 25 years had passed since God’s first conversation with Abram in Harran. Don’t forget that Abram had spent the past 13 years raising Ishmael as his covenant heir. Based on those facts, it isn’t a surprise that Abram’s first response was to laugh and proclaim, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” But then Abram obeyed. That very day he had all of the men of his household circumcised. God decreed circumcision as the sign of this covenant, as an outward marker on those to whom the covenant was applied, and a symbol of their submission to Him.

>> God calls us to holiness—to be set apart for Him. What marks you as God’s? In what way is He calling you to “walk before Him and be blameless” right now? Pray for the wisdom, courage, and consecration to do so.

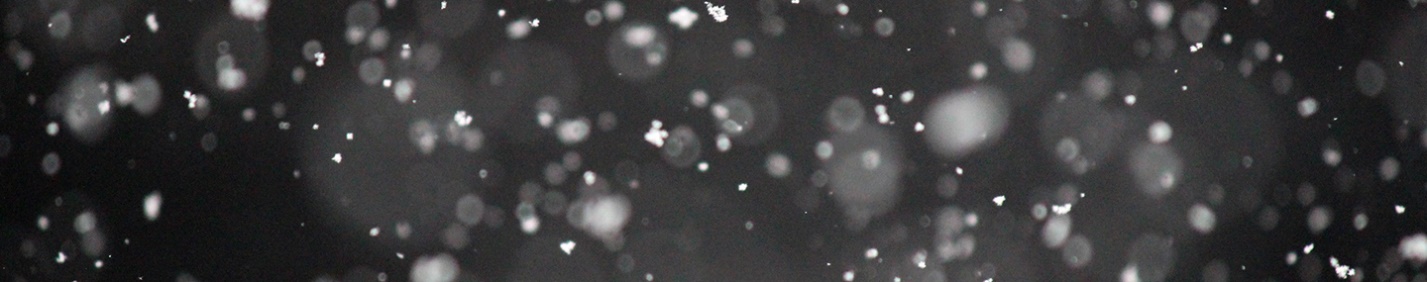
### **Pray with Us**

We ask for clarity as we seek your guidance, Lord. Grant us courage to obey you in every detail - even when it goes against our culture. We desire to shine your unmistakable light in the world.

## BY Kelli Worrall

# Our Daily Bread – 3/9/21

# Snow Muse

 **Read:** [**Job 36:26–29**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2036.26%E2%80%9329)

26How great is God—beyond our understanding!  
    The number of his years is past finding out.

27“He draws up the drops of water,  
    which distill as rain to the streams[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+36%3A26%E2%80%9329+%3B+37%3A5%E2%80%937&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13764a)];  
28the clouds pour down their moisture  
    and abundant showers fall on mankind.  
29Who can understand how he spreads out the clouds,  
    how he thunders from his pavilion?

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Job 36:27](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+36%3A26%E2%80%9329+%3B+37%3A5%E2%80%937&version=NIV#en-NIV-13764) Or distill from the mist as rain

**Read:** [**Job**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2036.26%E2%80%9329) [**37:5–7**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2037.5%E2%80%937)

5God’s voice thunders in marvelous ways;  
    he does great things beyond our understanding.  
6He says to the snow, ‘Fall on the earth,’  
    and to the rain shower, ‘Be a mighty downpour.’  
7So that everyone he has made may know his work,  
    he stops all people from their labor.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+36%3A26%E2%80%9329+%3B+37%3A5%E2%80%937&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-13777a" \o "See footnote a)]

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Job 37:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+36%3A26%E2%80%9329+%3B+37%3A5%E2%80%937&version=NIV#en-NIV-13777) Or work, / he fills all people with fear by his power

He says to the snow, “Fall on the earth,” and to the rain shower, “Be a mighty downpour.” [Job 37:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2037.6)

Named for a tough blue-collar neighborhood in Cincinnati, Ohio, the grassroots musical group Over the Rhine sings about a transformation that took place each year in the city. “Whenever we’d get our first real snowfall of the year, it felt like something sacred was happening,” explains band co-founder Linford Detweiler. “Like a little bit of a fresh start. The city would slow down and grow quiet.”

If you’ve experienced a heavy snowfall, you understand how it can inspire a song. A magical quietness drapes the world as snow conceals grime and grayness. For a few moments, winter’s bleakness brightens, inviting our reflection and delight.

Elihu, the one friend of Job who may have had a helpful view of God, noted how creation commands our attention. “God’s voice thunders in marvelous ways,” he said ([Job 37:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2037.5)). “He says to the snow, ‘Fall on the earth,’ and to the rain shower, ‘Be a mighty downpour.’ ” Such splendor can interrupt our lives, demanding a sacred pause. “So that everyone he has made may know his work, he stops all people from their labor,” Elihu observed (vv. 6–7).

Nature sometimes seizes our attention in ways we don’t like. Regardless of what happens to us or what we observe around us, each moment—magnificent, menacing, or mundane—can inspire our worship. The poet’s heart within us craves the holy hush.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What events or things motivate you to ponder God’s greatness and creativity? How can you experience His wonder in your ordinary moments today?

Father, help me to see Your hand in everything today. Give me a heart to appreciate Your amazing works.

#### **Insight**

The book of Job is renowned as a treatise on how suffering impacts us as human beings, so much so that the bulk of the book’s content is devoted to Job (and his friends) processing and trying to understand his pain and loss. As such, it breaks down into three major sections: the events of Job’s suffering (chs. 1–2), the dialogue about his suffering (chs. 3–37), and God’s response to his complaint about his suffering (chs. 38–42). In the lengthy middle section, Job and his friends engage in debate about the meaning of suffering, with three friends taking turns to reflect on Job’s situation. It’s a fourth friend, Elihu, who joins the discussion in today’s biblical text. The theme of his discourse? That Job is wrong for questioning God because His mysterious works are beyond our comprehension and should be viewed with trust in His perfect, trustworthy character.

To learn more about the book of Job, visit [ChristianUniversity.org/courses/the-book-of-job/.](https://ChristianUniversity.org/courses/the-book-of-job/)

# God Calling – 3/9/21

# Nothing Is Small

Nothing is small to God. In His sight a sparrow is of greater value than a palace, one kindly word of more importance than a statesman's speech.

It is the Life in all that has value, and the quality of the life that determines the value. I came to give Eternal Life.

"And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed…they took up  of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand." - Mark 8:7-9

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/10/21

# Being an Example of His Message



Preach the word! —[2 Timothy 4:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Timothy+4%3A2)

We are not saved only to be instruments for God, but to be His sons and daughters. He does not turn us into spiritual agents but into spiritual messengers, and the message must be a part of us. The Son of God was His own message— “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” ([John 6:63](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:63)). As His disciples, our lives must be a holy example of the reality of our message. Even the natural heart of the unsaved will serve if called upon to do so, but it takes a heart broken by conviction of sin, baptized by the Holy Spirit, and crushed into submission to God’s purpose to make a person’s life a holy example of God’s message.

There is a difference between giving a testimony and preaching. A preacher is someone who has received the call of God and is determined to use all his energy to proclaim God’s truth. God takes us beyond our own aspirations and ideas for our lives, and molds and shapes us for His purpose, just as He worked in the disciples’ lives after Pentecost. The purpose of Pentecost was not to teach the disciples something, but to make them the incarnation of what they preached so that they would literally become God’s message in the flesh. “…you shall be witnesses to Me…” ([Acts 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1:8)).

Allow God to have complete liberty in your life when you speak. Before God’s message can liberate other people, His liberation must first be real in you. Gather your material carefully, and then allow God to “set your words on fire” for His glory.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

When a man’s heart is right with God the mysterious utterances of the Bible are spirit and life to him. Spiritual truth is discernible only to a pure heart, not to a keen intellect. It is not a question of profundity of intellect, but of purity of heart. Bringing Sons Unto Glory, 231 L

# CCEL – 3/10/21

The Lord will provide.—[GEN. 22:14.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.22.html" \l "Gen.22.14)

God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.—There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.—Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death.

My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.—He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.—The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusteth in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth: and with my song will I praise him.

[Gen. 22:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.22.html" \l "Gen.22.8).[Isa. 59:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.59.html" \l "Isa.59.1). -[Rom. 11:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.11.html" \l "Rom.11.26).[Psa. 146:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.146.html" \l "Ps.146.5). -[Psa. 33:18,19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.33.html" \l "Ps.33.18).[Phi. 4:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.4.html" \l "Phil.4.19). -[Heb. 13:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.5). -[Psa. 28:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.28.html" \l "Ps.28.7).

“In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved.” [Psalm 30:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.30.html" \l "Ps.30.6)

“Moab settled on his lees, he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” Give a man wealth; let his ships bring home continually rich freights; let the winds and waves appear to be his servants to bear his vessels across the bosom of the mighty deep; let his lands yield abundantly: let the weather be propitious to his crops; let uninterrupted success attend him; let him stand among men as a successful merchant; let him enjoy continued health; allow him with braced nerve and brilliant eye to march through the world, and live happily; give him the buoyant spirit; let him have the song perpetually on his lips; let his eye be ever sparkling with joy—and the natural consequence of such an easy state to any man, let him be the best Christian who ever breathed, will be presumption; even David said, “I shall never be moved;” and we are not better than David, nor half so good. Brother, beware of the smooth places of the way; if you are treading them, or if the way be rough, thank God for it. If God should always rock us in the cradle of prosperity; if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune; if we had not some stain on the alabaster pillar; if there were not a few clouds in the sky; if we had not some bitter drops in the wine of this life, we should become intoxicated with pleasure, we should dream “we stand;” and stand we should, but it would be upon a pinnacle; like the man asleep upon the mast, each moment we should be in jeopardy.

We bless God, then, for our afflictions; we thank him for our changes; we extol his name for losses of property; for we feel that had he not chastened us thus, we might have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial.

“Afflictions, though they seem severe, In mercy oft are sent.”

# Word Live – 3/10/21

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

# Scripture Union – 3/10/21

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# Today in the Word – 3/10/21

# Sarai - Living the Impossible

**Read:** [**Genesis 18:1–15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+18%3a1%e2%80%9315)

### **The Three Visitors**

18 The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

3He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+18%3a1%e2%80%9315" \l "fen-NIV-428a" \o "See footnote a)] do not pass your servant by. 4Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. 5Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

6So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+18%3a1%e2%80%9315#fen-NIV-431b)] of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

7Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. 8He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

9“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

10Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

13Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ 14Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

15Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Genesis 18:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+18%3a1%e2%80%9315#en-NIV-428) Or eyes, Lord
2. [Genesis 18:6](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+18%3a1%e2%80%9315#en-NIV-431) That is, probably about 36 pounds or about 16 kilograms

My nine-year-old daughter remembers everything I say—at least when it comes to fun events or potential treats. I have to be very careful how I communicate to her, lest they be misconstrued as certainties. It’s painful to hear her disappointment when she says, “But Mom, you promised!” Promises are an important relational contract, and the ways in which we keep them—or don’t—go a long way to building or destroying trust. As fallen creatures, we struggle to keep the promises we make. But trustworthiness is fundamental to the character of God.

With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Matthew 19:26

Genesis 18 is a stunning account of a theophany (a visible manifestation of God). It also demonstrates God’s post-fall relationship with His children as He continued to pursue them despite their sin. Three “men” came to visit Abraham and Sarah, and based on Abraham’s direct address of “Lord” (“Adonay”), we deduce that he recognized one of them as God. Immediately, Abraham ordered his household to prepare a feast. During the meal, the visitors asked: “Where is your wife Sarah?” (v. 9). As divine beings, they knew her location, so they were not asking for information. Rather, they were leading to the point of their visit. In the next line, the visitor named “the Lord” made the bold promise that—within one year—Sarah would have a child.

Remarkably, in this instance, Abraham expressed no doubt. Sarah, however, laughed (v. 12). Did she laugh in astonishment? A lack of faith? The passage does not explain. However, her laughter does highlight the irony behind Isaac’s name (“laughter”). The query leads to the climactic, rhetorical question: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” The word here for “hard” indicates an endeavor beyond human capability. And the answer to the question is a clearly-implied “No!”

>> How do you receive God’s promises? Do you laugh in disbelief? In what way do you need to be reminded today that nothing is too hard for the Lord?

### **Pray with Us**

When we doubt, may we be reminded of Sarah’s laughter at God’s promise. Father, comfort and reassure us with the question you asked Sarah: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

## BY Kelli Worrall

# Our Daily Bread – 3/10/21

# Practice These Things

 **Read:** [**Philippians 4:1–9**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil%204.1%E2%80%939)

### **Closing Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity**

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

2I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

### **Final Exhortations**

4Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. [Philippians 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil%204.9)

As I helped my son with his math homework, it became apparent he was less than enthusiastic about doing multiple problems related to the same concept. “I’ve got it, Dad!” he insisted, hoping I would let him out of doing all of his assignment. I then gently explained to him that a concept is just a concept until we learn how to work it out in practice.

Paul wrote about practice to his friends in Philippi. “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice” ([Philippians 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil%204.9)). He mentions five things: reconciliation—as he urged Euodia and Syntyche to do (vv. 2–3); joy—as he reminded his readers to cultivate (v. 4); gentleness—as he urged them to employ in their relation to the world (v. 5); prayer—as he had modeled for them in person and in writing (vv. 6–7); and focus—as he had shown even in prison (v. 8). Reconciliation, joy, gentleness, prayer, and focus—things we’re called to live out as believers in Jesus. Like any habit, these virtues must be practiced in order to be cultivated.

But the good news of the gospel, as Paul had already told the Philippians, is that “it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (2:13). We’re never practicing in our own power. God will provide what we need (4:19).

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What things do you need to practice as you seek to imitate Jesus? How can you practice in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Jesus, give me the grace to practice Your ways by the power of the Holy Spirit. Empower me to live my life in a way that bears the fruit of the Spirit.

Read Filled with the Spirit at [DiscoverySeries.org/Q0301.](https://DiscoverySeries.org/Q0301.)

#### **Insight**

Addressing the believers in Jesus at Philippi, Paul encourages them not to be anxious about anything. The Greek word for anxious (merimnao) means “to be divided or distracted” in one’s thinking. Paul is suggesting that believers in Christ ought not to be pulled in multiple directions—like the doubter described in [James 1:6–8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James%201.6%E2%80%938). But he doesn’t simply leave the reader to figure out how to do this; he provides two-fold instruction for how to keep our minds focused. The first method for single-mindedness is taking our concerns to God in thankful prayer ([Philippians 4:6–7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil%204.6%E2%80%937)). This will guard our hearts and minds with the peace of Christ. Second, the apostle encourages us to focus our attention on things that are true, pure, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy (v. 8).

# God Calling – 3/10/21

# Fruit of Joy

You have to hush the heart and bid all your senses be still before you can be attuned to receive Heaven's music.

Your five senses are your means of communication with the material world, the links between your real Spirit-Life and the material manifestations around you, but you must sever all connection with them, when you wish to hold Spirit-communication. They will hinder, not help.

See the good in everybody. Love the good in them. See your unworthiness compared with their worth. Love, laugh, make the world, your little world, happy.

As the ripples caused by a flung stone stir the surface of a whole pond, so your joy-making shall spread in ever-widening circles, beyond all your knowledge, all anticipation. Joy in Me. Such Joy is eternal.

Centuries after, it is still bearing Joy's precious fruit.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." - John 15:11

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/11/21

# Obedience to the “Heavenly Vision”



I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. —[Acts 26:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Acts+26%3A19)

If we lose “the heavenly vision” God has given us, we alone are responsible— not God. We lose the vision because of our own lack of spiritual growth. If we do not apply our beliefs about God to the issues of everyday life, the vision God has given us will never be fulfilled. The only way to be obedient to “the heavenly vision” is to give our utmost for His highest— our best for His glory. This can be accomplished only when we make a determination to continually remember God’s vision. But the acid test is obedience to the vision in the details of our everyday life— sixty seconds out of every minute, and sixty minutes out of every hour, not just during times of personal prayer or public meetings.

“Though it tarries, wait for it…” ([Habakkuk 2:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+2:3)). We cannot bring the vision to fulfillment through our own efforts, but must live under its inspiration until it fulfills itself. We try to be so practical that we forget the vision. At the very beginning we saw the vision but did not wait for it. We rushed off to do our practical work, and once the vision was fulfilled we could no longer even see it. Waiting for a vision that “tarries” is the true test of our faithfulness to God. It is at the risk of our own soul’s welfare that we get caught up in practical busy-work, only to miss the fulfillment of the vision.

Watch for the storms of God. The only way God plants His saints is through the whirlwind of His storms. Will you be proven to be an empty pod with no seed inside? That will depend on whether or not you are actually living in the light of the vision you have seen. Let God send you out through His storm, and don’t go until He does. If you select your own spot to be planted, you will prove yourself to be an unproductive, empty pod. However, if you allow God to plant you, you will “bear much fruit” ([John 15:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:8)).

It is essential that we live and “walk in the light” of God’s vision for us ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The truth is we have nothing to fear and nothing to overcome because He is all in all and we are more than conquerors through Him. The recognition of this truth is not flattering to the worker’s sense of heroics, but it is amazingly glorifying to the work of Christ. Approved Unto God, 4 R

# CCEL – 3/11/21

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee.—[NUM. 6:24.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Num.6.html" \l "Num.6.24)

The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.—Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.—I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept.

The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[Prov. 10:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.10.html" \l "Prov.10.22). -[Psa. 5:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.5.html" \l "Ps.5.12).[Psa. 121:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.121.html" \l "Ps.121.3),[5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.121.html" \l "Ps.121.5),[7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.121.html" \l "Ps.121.7). -[Isa. 27:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.27.html" \l "Isa.27.3).[John 17:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.11).[II Tim. 4:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.4.html" \l "iiTim.4.18).

“Sin ... exceeding sinful.” [Romans 7:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.7.html" \l "Rom.7.13)

Beware of light thoughts of sin. At the time of conversion, the conscience is so tender, that we are afraid of the slightest sin. Young converts have a holy timidity, a godly fear lest they should offend against God. But alas! very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world: the sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow in after life, too pliant, too easily yielding. It is sadly true, that even a Christian may grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him does not alarm him in the least. By degrees men get familiar with sin. The ear in which the cannon has been booming will not notice slight sounds. At first a little sin startles us; but soon we say, “Is it not a little one?” Then there comes another, larger, and then another, until by degrees we begin to regard sin as but a little ill; and then follows an unholy presumption: “We have not fallen into open sin. True, we tripped a little, but we stood upright in the main. We may have uttered one unholy word, but as for the most of our conversation, it has been consistent.” So we palliate sin; we throw a cloak over it; we call it by dainty names. Christian, beware how thou thinkest lightly of sin. Take heed lest thou fall by little and little. Sin, a little thing? Is it not a poison? Who knows its deadliness? Sin, a little thing? Do not the little foxes spoil the grapes? Doth not the tiny coral insect build a rock which wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings wear away stones? Sin, a little thing? It girded the Redeemer’s head with thorns, and pierced his heart! It made him suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe. Could you weigh the least sin in the scales of eternity, you would fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor the least appearance of evil. Look upon all sin as that which crucified the Saviour, and you will see it to be “exceeding sinful.”

# Word Live – 3/11/21

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

# Scripture Union – 3/11/21

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

# Today in the Word – 3/11/21

# Sarah - Sovereign God

**Read:** [**Genesis 20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+20)

### **Abraham and Abimelek**

20 Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, 2and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

3But God came to Abimelek in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”

4Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? 5Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.”

6Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. 7Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.”

8Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid. 9Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.” 10And Abimelek asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”

11Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ 12Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. 13And when God had me wander from my father’s household, I said to her, ‘This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

14Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. 15And Abimelek said, “My land is before you; live wherever you like.”

16To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+20#fen-NIV-512a)] of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”

17Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, 18for the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelek’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Genesis 20:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+20#en-NIV-512) That is, about 25 pounds or about 12 kilograms

We have a tendency to fall back into sin, doing the very thing we know is wrong. When we seem to “get away” with a sin, the temptation grows to try it again.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:17

Genesis 20 records that for a second time Abraham lied about Sarah’s status—calling her his sister, rather than his wife. It’s possible that they used this technique regularly, “everywhere we go” (v. 13). Having no reason to doubt Abraham’s word, Abimelech, the king of Gerar, sent for Sarah, and rather than admitting his lie, Abraham let her go. Whether Abraham recognized it or not, the stakes were higher this time. When they were in Egypt, Sarah was barren (see Genesis 12). But as they moved to Gerar, Sarah was fertile. The long-awaited promised son would be born within the year. If Sarah spent even one night with Abimelech, Isaac’s paternity could have been called into question. The entire covenant was on the line. God did not allow Abraham’s folly to muddle matters (v. 6).

His sovereignty is on full display throughout this narrative. God appeared in a dream to Abimelech at just the right time. He opened Abimelech’s heart to receive the message with humility and fear. God, thus, kept Sarah from spending the night with Abimelech and protected the clear paternity of Isaac. He closed and opened the womb of all the women in Abimelech’s household (vv. 17–18). He even blessed Abraham abundantly through Abimelech in spite of his ruse. And He worked through Abraham to make Himself known to the people of Gerar. Grace upon grace! What a wonderful reassurance that God will keep His covenant. He will carry out His plan. He is able—in spite of us.

### **Pray with Us**

We praise you for your omnipotence, for you can work our acts of fear and faithlessness into events that glorify your name. Nevertheless, we ask for submissive hearts and minds that delight in your will!

## BY Kelli Worrall

# Our Daily Bread – 3/11/21

# Out of Our Poverty

 **Read:** [**Mark 12:38–44**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2012.38%E2%80%9344)

### **Warning Against the Teachers of the Law**

38As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, 39and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

### **The Widow’s Offering**

41Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

43Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on. [Mark 12:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2012.44)

Warren Buffett and Bill and Melinda Gates made history when they launched the Giving Pledge, promising to donate half of their money. As of 2018, this meant giving away 92 billion dollars. The pledge made psychologist Paul Piff curious to study giving patterns. Through a research test, he discovered that the poor were inclined to give 44 percent more of what they had than wealthy people. Those who’ve felt their own poverty are often moved to greater generosity.

Jesus knew this. Visiting the temple, He watched the crowds drop gifts into the treasury ([Mark 12:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2012.41)). The rich tossed in wads of cash, but a poor widow pulled out her last two copper coins, worth maybe a penny, and placed them into the basket. I picture Jesus standing up, delighted and astounded. Immediately, He gathered His disciples, making sure they didn’t miss this dazzling act. “This poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others,” Jesus exclaimed (v. 43). The disciples looked at each other, bewildered, hoping someone could explain what Jesus was talking about. So, He made it plain: those bringing huge gifts “gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything” (v. 44).

We may have little to give, but Jesus invites us to give out of our poverty. Though it may seem meager to others, we give what we have, and God finds great joy in our lavish gifts.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What does it mean for you to give out of your poverty? How can you give “everything” for Jesus today?

God, I don’t feel like I have much to offer. My gifts feel puny and worthless. But I’m here. All of me. Will You receive me in my poverty?

#### **Insight**

The celebration of generosity shared by Jesus in [Mark 12:43–44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2012.43%E2%80%9344)—especially the idea of giving out of one’s poverty—is also reflected in the apostle Paul’s account of the churches of Macedonia. During a severe trial, “their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity” ([2 Corinthians 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%208.2)). They gave “even beyond their ability” (v. 3) because they regarded it “the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people” (v. 4). The secret to the Macedonians’ generosity was that “they gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then . . . also to us” (v. 5). In other words, their prior allegiance to Jesus was expressed in their commitment to the welfare of others.

Ultimately, generosity can’t be forced because it’s a dynamic of the heart. So, Paul says, “each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (9:7).

# God Calling – 3/11/21

# Seek Beauty

Draw Beauty from every flower and Joy from the song of the birds, and the color of the flowers.

Drink in the beauty of air and color.  I am with you. When I wanted to express a beautiful thought, I made a lovely flower. I have told you. Reflect.

When I want to express to man what I am - what my Father is - I strive to make a very beautiful character.

Think of yourselves as My expression of attributes, as a lovely flower is My expression of thought, and you will strive in all, in Spiritual beauty, in Thought - power, in Health, in clothing, to be as fit an expression for Me as you can.

Absorb Beauty. As soon as the beauty of a flower or a tree is impressed upon your soul it leaves an image there which reflects through your actions. Remember that no thought of sin and suffering, of the approaching scorn and Crucifixion, ever prevented My seeing the beauty of the flowers.

Look for beauty and joy in the world around. Look at a flower until its beauty becomes part of your very soul. It will be given back to the world again by you in the form of a smile or a loving word or a kind thought or a prayer.

Listen to a bird. Take the song as a message from My Father. Let it sink into your soul. That too will be given back to the world in ways I have said. Laugh more, laugh often. Love more. I am with you. I am your Lord.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." - Psalm 19:1

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/12/21

# Total Surrender



Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." —[Mark 10:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Mark+10%3A28)

Our Lord replies to this statement of Peter by saying that this surrender is “for My sake and the gospel’s” (10:29). It was not for the purpose of what the disciples themselves would get out of it. Beware of surrender that is motivated by personal benefits that may result. For example, “I’m going to give myself to God because I want to be delivered from sin, because I want to be made holy.” Being delivered from sin and being made holy are the result of being right with God, but surrender resulting from this kind of thinking is certainly not the true nature of Christianity. Our motive for surrender should not be for any personal gain at all. We have become so self-centered that we go to God only for something from Him, and not for God Himself. It is like saying, “No, Lord, I don’t want you; I want myself. But I do want You to clean me and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I want to be on display in Your showcase so I can say, ‘This is what God has done for me.’ ” Gaining heaven, being delivered from sin, and being made useful to God are things that should never even be a consideration in real surrender. Genuine total surrender is a personal sovereign preference for Jesus Christ Himself.

Where does Jesus Christ figure in when we have a concern about our natural relationships? Most of us will desert Him with this excuse— “Yes, Lord, I heard you call me, but my family needs me and I have my own interests. I just can’t go any further” (see [Luke 9:57-62](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9:57-62)). “Then,” Jesus says, “you ‘cannot be My disciple’ ” (see [Luke 14:26-33](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14:26-33)).

True surrender will always go beyond natural devotion. If we will only give up, God will surrender Himself to embrace all those around us and will meet their needs, which were created by our surrender. Beware of stopping anywhere short of total surrender to God. Most of us have only a vision of what this really means, but have never truly experienced it.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Beware of isolation; beware of the idea that you have to develop a holy life alone. It is impossible to develop a holy life alone; you will develop into an oddity and a peculiarism, into something utterly unlike what God wants you to be. The only way to develop spiritually is to go into the society of God’s own children, and you will soon find how God alters your set. God does not contradict our social instincts; He alters them.  Biblical Psychology, 189 L

# CCEL – 3/12/21

The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.—[NUM. 6:25,26.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Num.6.html" \l "Num.6.25)

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.—The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.—The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies sake. Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee.—Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.—Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

[John 1:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.1.html" \l "John.1.18). -[Heb. 1:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.1.html" \l "Heb.1.3)-[II Cor. 4:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.4.html" \l "iiCor.4.4).[Psa. 31:16,17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.31.html" \l "Ps.31.16). -[Psa. 30:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.30.html" \l "Ps.30.7). -[Psa. 89:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.89.html" \l "Ps.89.15).[Psa. 29:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.29.html" \l "Ps.29.11).[Matt. 14:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.14.html" \l "Matt.14.27).

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour.” [Matthew 5:43](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.5.html" \l "Matt.5.43)

“Love thy neighbour.” Perhaps he rolls in riches, and thou art poor, and living in thy little cot side-by-side with his lordly mansion; thou seest every day his estates, his fine linen, and his sumptuous banquets; God has given him these gifts, covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. Be content with thine own lot, if thou canst not better it, but do not look upon thy neighbour, and wish that he were as thyself. Love him, and then thou wilt not envy him.

Perhaps, on the other hand, thou art rich, and near thee reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbour. Own that thou art bound to love them. The world calls them thy inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are far more thine equals than thine inferiors, for “God hath made of one blood all people that dwell upon the face of the earth.” It is thy coat which is better than theirs, but thou art by no means better than they. They are men, and what art thou more than that? Take heed that thou love thy neighbour even though he be in rags, or sunken in the depths of poverty.

But, perhaps, you say, “I cannot love my neighbours, because for all I do they return ingratitude and contempt.” So much the more room for the heroism of love. Wouldst thou be a feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? He who dares the most, shall win the most; and if rough be thy path of love, tread it boldly, still loving thy neighbours through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they be hard to please, seek not to please them, but to please thy Master; and remember if they spurn thy love, thy Master hath not spurned it, and thy deed is as acceptable to him as if it had been acceptable to them. Love thy neighbour, for in so doing thou art following the footsteps of Christ.

# Word Live – 3/12/21

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

# Scripture Union – 3/12/21

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

# Today in the Word – 3/12/21

# Sarah - A Promise Fulfilled

**Read:** [**Genesis 21:1–8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21%3a1%e2%80%938+)

### **The Birth of Isaac**

21 Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. 2Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. 3Abraham gave the name Isaac[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21%3a1%e2%80%938+#fen-NIV-517a)] to the son Sarah bore him. 4When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. 5Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

6Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” 7And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

### **Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away**

8The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Genesis 21:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21%3a1%e2%80%938+#en-NIV-517) Isaac means he laughs.

My husband and I endured such an arduous journey to parenthood that, when we finally brought our son into our home, everything became cause for celebration. His first tooth. His first word. His first steps. His first birthday is still the most elaborate party I’ve ever thrown. I invited everyone who had walked with us through pain to celebrate our joy.

And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children. Hebrews 11:11

Interestingly, after all of the anticipation surrounding Isaac’s arrival, his actual birth is reported with little fanfare. But even though it’s a spare account, it is a significant one. Notice that Sarah’s role is emphasized. She is portrayed as the object of God’s grace and the recipient of His promise (v. 1). Sarah was not just along for the ride. She was not simply a helpful tool, needed for God to bless Abraham. Sarah herself was also the beneficiary of God’s blessing. The Lord saw her and did this for her, as well as for Abraham.

The centrality of Sarah in this passage underscores God’s faithfulness. While Abraham and Sarah had doubted God along the way and pursued their own paths toward parenthood, and while Abraham had previously thought of Ishmael as his primary heir, God had His own plan—to bless Abraham through a son with Sarah. Finally, God brought that plan to fulfillment and kept that particular promise. There could be no mistake. As God had commanded, Abraham named his son Isaac, which means “he will laugh.” Even Sarah understood the irony. The name would always remind them of their skepticism. "Who would have said . . . ?” (v. 7). But the name would also be a testimony to God, who brought her joy. He had redeemed her sorrow, and He would also extend that joy to “everyone who hears about this.”

>> How have you seen God keep His promises? How has He brought you laughter out of pain? What are you trusting Him for right now? Give Him praise today, and share that joy with someone else.

### **Pray with Us**

Almighty God, today we pause to recount your faithfulness to us. However burdened or frightened we may be, our present trials do not change your grace in the past and your promises for the future.

## BY Kelli Worrall

# Our Daily Bread – 3/12/21

# Every Breath

**Read:** [**Ezekiel 37:1–3**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek%2037.1%E2%80%933)

### **The Valley of Dry Bones**

37 The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. 3He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “Sovereign Lord, you alone know.”

**Read:** [**Ezekiel 37:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek%2037.1%E2%80%933)[**7–10**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezekiel%2037.7%E2%80%9310)

7So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

9Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” 10So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

**Read:** [**Ezekiel 37:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek%2037.1%E2%80%933)[**14**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezekiel%2037.14)

14I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.’”

I will put breath in you. [Ezekiel 37:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek%2037.6)

When Tee Unn came down with a rare autoimmune disease that weakened all his muscles and nearly killed him, he realized that being able to breathe was a gift. For more than a week, a machine had to pump air into his lungs every few seconds, which was a painful part of his treatment.

Tee Unn made a miraculous recovery, and today he reminds himself not to complain about life’s challenges. “I’ll just take a deep breath,” he says, “and thank God I can.”

How easy it is to focus on things we need or want, and forget that sometimes the smallest things in life can be the greatest miracles. In Ezekiel’s vision ([Ezekiel 37:1–14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek%2037.1%E2%80%9314)), God showed the prophet that only He could give life to dry bones. Even after tendons, flesh, and skin had appeared, “there was no breath in them” (v. 8). It was only when God gave them breath that they could live again (v. 10).

This vision illustrated God’s promise to restore Israel from devastation. It also reminds me that anything I have, big or small, is useless unless God gives me breath.

How about thanking God for the simplest blessings in life today? Amid the daily struggle, let’s stop occasionally to take a deep breath, and “let everything that has breath praise the Lord” ([Psalm 150:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20150.6)).

By:  [Leslie Koh](https://odb.org/author/lesliekoh/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What will you thank God for right now? How can you remind yourself to thank Him more often today?

Thank You, God, for every breath You’ve given me. Thank You for the smallest things in life and the greatest miracles of life.

#### **Insight**

In the record of Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones ([Ezekiel 37:1–14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek%2037.1%E2%80%9314)), two repeated words paint the scene in particularly vivid imagery: bones and breath(e). These words set up the contrast between what Ezekiel sees and what God does. Twelve times the word bone(s) is repeated in these verses. The repetition creates the unmistakable image of death, but not that of the recently deceased. The death shown to Ezekiel by the Spirit of God is that of the long dead—no skin, muscle, or tendons are left; the dry bones lay scattered on the valley floor, no longer connected to each other.

In contrast to the dry bones is the promise and power of God’s breath. It alone undoes death. When “the bones came together” (v. 7) and were covered with sinew and flesh, they still weren’t alive. It was only when the breath of God entered them that they became a living army once again.

# God Calling – 3/12/21

# Simplicity

Simplicity is the keynote of My Kingdom. Choose simple things always.

Love and reverence the humble and the simple.

Have only simple things here. Your standard must never be the world's standard.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." - Matthew 6:33

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/13/21

# God’s Total Surrender to Us



For God so loved the world that He gave… —[John 3:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+3%3A16)

Salvation does not mean merely deliverance from sin or the experience of personal holiness. The salvation which comes from God means being completely delivered from myself, and being placed into perfect union with Him. When I think of my salvation experience, I think of being delivered from sin and gaining personal holiness. But salvation is so much more! It means that the Spirit of God has brought me into intimate contact with the true Person of God Himself. And as I am caught up into total surrender to God, I become thrilled with something infinitely greater than myself.

To say that we are called to preach holiness or sanctification is to miss the main point. We are called to proclaim Jesus Christ (see [1 Corinthians 2:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+2:2)). The fact that He saves from sin and makes us holy is actually part of the effect of His wonderful and total surrender to us.

If we are truly surrendered, we will never be aware of our own efforts to remain surrendered. Our entire life will be consumed with the One to whom we surrender. Beware of talking about surrender if you know nothing about it. In fact, you will never know anything about it until you understand that [John 3:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3:16) means that God completely and absolutely gave Himself to us. In our surrender, we must give ourselves to God in the same way He gave Himself for us— totally, unconditionally, and without reservation. The consequences and circumstances resulting from our surrender will never even enter our mind, because our life will be totally consumed with Him.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 3/13/21

There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.—[I TIM. 2:5.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.2.html" \l "iTim.2.5)

Forasmuch . . . as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.—In Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace.—By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.—He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

[Heb. 2:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.14).[Isa. 45:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.45.html" \l "Isa.45.22).[I John 2:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.1). -[Eph. 2:13,14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.13). -[Heb. 9:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.9.html" \l "Heb.9.12),[15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.9.html" \l "Heb.9.15). -[Heb. 7:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.7.html" \l "Heb.7.25).

“Why sit we here until we die?” [2 Kings 7:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiKgs.7.html" \l "iiKgs.7.3)

Dear reader, this little book was mainly intended for the edification of believers, but if you are yet unsaved, our heart yearns over you: and we would fain say a word which may be blessed to you. Open your Bible, and read the story of the lepers, and mark their position, which was much the same as yours. If you remain where you are you must perish; if you go to Jesus you can but die. “Nothing venture, nothing win,” is the old proverb, and in your case the venture is no great one. If you sit still in sullen despair, no one can pity you when your ruin comes; but if you die with mercy sought, if such a thing were possible, you would be the object of universal sympathy. None escape who refuse to look to Jesus; but you know that, at any rate, some are saved who believe in him, for certain of your own acquaintances have received mercy: then why not you? The Ninevites said, “Who can tell?” Act upon the same hope, and try the Lord’s mercy. To perish is so awful, that if there were but a straw to catch at, the instinct of self-preservation should lead you to stretch out your hand. We have thus been talking to you on your own unbelieving ground, we would now assure you, as from the Lord, that if you seek him he will be found of you. Jesus casts out none who come unto him. You shall not perish if you trust him; on the contrary, you shall find treasure far richer than the poor lepers gathered in Syria’s deserted camp. May the Holy Spirit embolden you to go at once, and you shall not believe in vain. When you are saved yourself, publish the good news to others. Hold not your peace; tell the King’s household first, and unite with them in fellowship; let the porter of the city, the minister, be informed of your discovery, and then proclaim the good news in every place. The Lord save thee ere the sun goes down this day.

# Word Live – 3/13/21

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

# Scripture Union – 3/13/21

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

# Today in the Word – 3/13/21

# Sarah - A God Who Preserves

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

9But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, 10and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

11The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. 12But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21%3a9%e2%80%9321+#fen-NIV-526a)] will be reckoned. 13I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

14Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

15When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. 16Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there, she[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21%3a9%e2%80%9321+#fen-NIV-530b)] began to sob.

17God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. 18Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

19Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

20God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. 21While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Genesis 21:12](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21%3a9%e2%80%9321+#en-NIV-526) Or seed
2. [Genesis 21:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21%3a9%e2%80%9321+#en-NIV-530) Hebrew; Septuagint the child

Do you and your siblings always get along? Has there ever been rivalry between you? Sibling rivalry began with humanity’s very first sibling set: Abel and Cain. And it has infected every relationship between siblings—to a greater or lesser degree—ever since. Sibling rivalry often starts immediately after the arrival of a second child. The older child, who previously enjoyed the parents’ sole attention, becomes jealous when that devotion is suddenly divided.

The LORD protects and preserves them—they are counted among the blessed in the land—he does not give them over to the desire of their foes. Psalm 41:2

That is exactly what happened in Genesis 21. When Isaac was weaned, Abraham held a feast to celebrate, but Ishmael who was about 16 years old was watching from the wings, “mocking” his young half-brother. The word for “mocking” is the same word used to name Isaac (“laughter”), but here it has the connotation of ridicule (v. 9). The sibling hostility that God had warned of in Genesis 16:12 was already evident, and Sarah was not happy.

Sarah ordered Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael. She feared for Isaac’s inheritance, revealing a shocking lack of faith that the God, who had miraculously given her a child in her old age, would continue to fulfill His promises. Abraham was distressed, but he followed his wife’s lead—much like Adam who took the fruit from Eve. He sent Hagar and Ishmael away (v. 14). When Hagar’s water ran out, she put Ishmael under a bush as a reprieve from the heat. She sat at a distance, waiting for him to die. Imagine her despair! Then—for a second time—Hagar received a visitation from God (v. 17). He comforted her with the promise that Ishmael would be a great nation, and He provided for her immediate needs with a well of water.

>> How often do we pull a “Sarah”? We experience the miraculous provision of God. Then we doubt again and let fear overcome. We take matters into our own hands, making a mess of things. How has this pattern been a part of your journey? How have you seen God provide despite your weakness?

### **Pray with Us**

Lord, we have short memories. We praise you that you remain unchangeable even when our confidence is blown here and there by the winds of our circumstances. You give us our daily bread.

## BY Kelli Worrall

# Our Daily Bread – 3/13/21

# God’s Storybook

 **Read:** [**Genesis 1:26–31**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%201.26%E2%80%9331)

26Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1%3A26%E2%80%9331&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-26a" \o "See footnote a)] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27So God created mankind in his own image,  
    in the image of God he created them;  
    male and female he created them.

28God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

29Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

31God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Genesis 1:26](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1%3A26%E2%80%9331&version=NIV#en-NIV-26) Probable reading of the original Hebrew text (see Syriac); Masoretic Text the earth

God blessed them. . . . God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. [Genesis 1:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%201.28), [31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Genesis%201.31)

Wanting to enjoy the beautiful day, I headed out for a walk and soon met a new neighbor. He stopped me and introduced himself: “My name is Genesis, and I’m six and a half years old.”

“Genesis is a great name! It’s a book in the Bible,” I replied.

“What’s the Bible?” he asked.

“It’s God’s storybook about how He made the world and people and how He loves us.”

His inquisitive response made me smile: “Why did He make the world and people and cars and houses? And is my picture in His book?”

While there isn’t a literal picture of my new friend Genesis or the rest of us in the Scriptures, we’re a big part of God’s storybook. We see in [Genesis 1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%201) that “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God He created them” (v. 27). God walked with them in the garden, and then warned about giving in to the temptation to be their own god (ch. 3). Later in His book, God told about how, in love, His Son, Jesus, came to walk with us again and brought about a plan for our forgiveness and the restoration of His creation.

As we look at the Bible, we learn that our Creator wants us to know Him, talk with Him, and even ask Him our questions. He cares for us more than we can imagine.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Where do you see yourself in God’s story? In what ways are you experiencing His fellowship?

Loving God, thank You for making me a part of Your story. May I love You and others as You love me.

Read Understanding the Bible: The Gospels at [DiscoverySeries.org/Q0414](https://DiscoverySeries.org/Q0414).

#### **Insight**

We’re given two different accounts of creation in [Genesis 1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%201%E2%80%932). The reason for two accounts is the source of much scholarly debate. One view is that having two creation stories is similar to having two birth narratives for Jesus ([Matthew 1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%201%E2%80%932) and [Luke 1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%201%E2%80%932)) or to the presence of four gospel records—each provides details not presented in the others. Applying this approach to the two creation accounts, it’s not unreasonable to see [Genesis 1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%201) as an overview of the big picture of the world’s creation, with chapter 2 looping back to provide us with important details, particularly regarding the creation of the first man and woman.

# God Calling – 3/13/21

# Spiritualism

Wait before Me, gently breathing in My Spirit.

That Spirit which, if given a free entrance, and not barred out by self, will enable you to do the sa me works as I did, which being interpreted is, will enable Me to do the same works, and even greater than I did when on earth - through you.

Spiritualism is wrong. No man should ever be a medium for any spirit, other than Mine.

All you should know, all it is well for you to know of My Spirit-Kingdom, I will tell you when and how I see best. The limit is set by your own spiritual development.

Follow My injunctions in all things.

Peace - Peace - Peace.

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." - Galatians 5:16

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/14/21

# Yielding



…you are that one’s slaves whom you obey… —[Romans 6:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Romans+6%3A16)

The first thing I must be willing to admit when I begin to examine what controls and dominates me is that I am the one responsible for having yielded myself to whatever it may be. If I am a slave to myself, I am to blame because somewhere in the past I yielded to myself. Likewise, if I obey God I do so because at some point in my life I yielded myself to Him.

If a child gives in to selfishness, he will find it to be the most enslaving tyranny on earth. There is no power within the human soul itself that is capable of breaking the bondage of the nature created by yielding. For example, yield for one second to anything in the nature of lust, and although you may hate yourself for having yielded, you become enslaved to that thing. (Remember what lust is— “I must have it now,” whether it is the lust of the flesh or the lust of the mind.) No release or escape from it will ever come from any human power, but only through the power of redemption. You must yield yourself in utter humiliation to the only One who can break the dominating power in your life, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. “…He has anointed Me…to proclaim liberty to the captives…” ([Luke 4:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+4:18) and [Isaiah 61:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+61:1)).

When you yield to something, you will soon realize the tremendous control it has over you. Even though you say, “Oh, I can give up that habit whenever I like,” you will know you can’t. You will find that the habit absolutely dominates you because you willingly yielded to it. It is easy to sing, “He will break every fetter,” while at the same time living a life of obvious slavery to yourself. But yielding to Jesus will break every kind of slavery in any person’s life.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The great thing about faith in God is that it keeps a man undisturbed in the midst of disturbance. Notes on Isaiah, 1376 R

# CCEL – 3/14/21

Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.—[TIT. 2:10.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Titus.2.html" \l "Titus.2.10)

Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.—Abstain from all appearance of evil.—If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.—Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.—Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart; so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.—Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

[Phi. 1:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html" \l "Phil.1.27). -[I Thes. 5:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.5.html" \l "iThess.5.22). -[I Pet. 4:14,15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.4.html" \l "iPet.4.14). -[Phi. 2:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.15). -[Matt. 5:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.5.html" \l "Matt.5.16).[Prov. 3:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.3.html" \l "Prov.3.3). -[Phi. 4:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.4.html" \l "Phil.4.8).

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” [1 Corinthians 10:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.10.html" \l "iCor.10.12)

It is a curious fact, that there is such a thing as being proud of grace. A man says, “I have great faith, I shall not fall; poor little faith may, but I never shall.” “I have fervent love,” says another, “I can stand, there is no danger of my going astray.” He who boasts of grace has little grace to boast of. Some who do this imagine that their graces can keep them, knowing not that the stream must flow constantly from the fountain head, or else the brook will soon be dry. If a continuous stream of oil comes not to the lamp, though it burn brightly today, it will smoke to-morrow, and noxious will be its scent. Take heed that thou gloriest not in thy graces, but let all thy glorying and confidence be in Christ and his strength, for only so canst thou be kept from falling. Be much more in prayer. Spend longer time in holy adoration. Read the Scriptures more earnestly and constantly. Watch your lives more carefully. Live nearer to God. Take the best examples for your pattern. Let your conversation be redolent of heaven. Let your hearts be perfumed with affection for men’s souls. So live that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of him; and when that happy day shall come, when he whom you love shall say, “Come up higher,” may it be your happiness to hear him say, “Thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast finished thy course, and henceforth there is laid up for thee a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away.” On, Christian, with care and caution! On, with holy fear and trembling! On, with faith and confidence in Jesus alone, and let your constant petition be, “Uphold me according to thy word.” He is able, and he alone, “To keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

# Word Live – 3/14/21

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

# Scripture Union – 3/14/21

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

# Today in the Word – 3/14/21

# Sarah - A God Who Provides

**Read:** [**Genesis 22**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22)

### **Abraham Tested**

22 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

2Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

3Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

6Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

8Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

9When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

12“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

13Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22#fen-NIV-561a)] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

15The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16and said, “I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18and through your offspring[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22#fen-NIV-566b)] all nations on earth will be blessed,[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22" \l "fen-NIV-566c" \o "See footnote c)] because you have obeyed me.”

19Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

### **Nahor’s Sons**

20Some time later Abraham was told, “Milkah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor: 21Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), 22Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel.” 23Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. Milkah bore these eight sons to Abraham’s brother Nahor. 24His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maakah.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Genesis 22:13](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22#en-NIV-561) Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint and Syriac; most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text a ram behind him
2. [Genesis 22:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22#en-NIV-566) Or seed
3. [Genesis 22:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22#en-NIV-566) Or and all nations on earth will use the name of your offspring in blessings (see 48:20)

Two years ago, my husband Peter suffered a small stroke. By God’s provision, he has made a strong recovery, but this journey tested our faith in new ways. God does that sometimes. He wants to know that He alone is enough. In Genesis 22, the same enduring God who gave and preserved life, now “tested” Abraham by instructing him to sacrifice his “only son,” whom he loved.

So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. Genesis 22:14

Yes, Abraham had another son—Ishmael. But Isaac was Abraham’s only son through Sarah, his only covenant son. In multiple ways, this account points ahead to God’s own sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus. Abraham’s faith had matured, so he responded purposefully to this call: “Here I am” (v. 1). Early the next morning, he followed the command. For three long days, Abraham and Isaac traveled to the place of sacrifice, giving Abraham time to confirm or abandon his commitment. When they came near, Abraham told the servants, “Stay here . . . We will worship and then we will come back.” The plural pronoun “we” indicates a confident faith, driven by a desire to worship God alone.

Abraham placed the wood on Isaac’s back, and Isaac himself carried it to the altar—a foreshadowing of Christ and His cross. On the way, Isaac observed that they had no lamb (v. 7). Again Abraham responded with faith, pointing to God Who would “provide the lamb” (v. 8). And God did provide. Just in time. When Isaac was lying on the altar and Abraham had reached for his knife, God broke in. “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” God said, “For now I know that you fear God” (v. 12). Here God revealed another purpose for this test. Yes, it strengthened Abraham’s faith, taught Isaac about obedience, and showed readers a father’s sacrifice. But God also gained something. “Now I know that you fear God” (v. 12).

>> God’s call is often challenging, and it can test our faith. What motivates our obedience? Is it the good gifts we hope to gain on the other side? Or is God Himself enough?

### **Pray with Us**

You see into our hearts, and we ask you to purify our motives as we serve you. Banish pride, fear, self-serving attitudes, and anything else that we pursue instead of you. You alone complete us, God.

## BY Kelli Worrall

# Our Daily Bread – 3/14/21

# Storms of Fear

 **Read:** [**Mark 4:35–41**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%204.35%E2%80%9341)

### **Jesus Calms the Storm**

35That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” 36Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

39He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

41They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

[Jesus] said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” [Mark 4:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%204.40)

In a TV commercial I saw recently, a woman casually asks someone in a group watching TV, “What are you searching for, Mark?” “A version of myself that doesn’t make decisions based on fear,” he responds soberly—not realizing that she was just asking what he liked to watch on TV!

Whoa, I thought. I wasn’t expecting a TV commercial to hit me so profoundly! But I related to poor Mark: I too feel embarrassed by the way fear sometimes seems to direct my life.

Jesus’ disciples also experienced the profound power of fear. Once, as they headed across the Sea of Galilee ([Mark 4:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%204.35)), “a furious squall came up” (v. 37). Terror gripped them, and they suggested that Jesus (who’d been sleeping!) might not care about them: “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” (v. 38).

Fear distorted the disciples’ vision, blinding them to Jesus’ good intentions for them. After He rebuked the wind and waves (v. 39), Christ confronted the disciples with two penetrating questions: “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (v. 40).

Storms rage in our lives as well, don’t they? But Jesus’ questions can help us put our fears in perspective. His first question invites us to name our fears. The second invites us to entrust those distorted feelings to Him—asking Him for eyes to see how He guides us even through life’s most raging storms.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What storms are you facing right now? How can you entrust your fears and emotions to Jesus when the winds blow and the waters rise?

Loving Savior, thank You that You’re always present in the storm. As I move through life’s scary moments, help me each day to talk to You and entrust You with my fears.

#### **Insight**

The Gospels tell us of two separate times when Jesus calmed a storm. Here in [Mark 4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%204), Jesus is already with the disciples, but He’s asleep in the boat. Although they’d seen Him perform great miracles, the disciples didn’t yet understand the full impact of those miracles, which clearly demonstrated Jesus’ power over every situation.

The second time Jesus stilled the sea ([Mark 6:47–52](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%206.47%E2%80%9352)), He wasn’t with the disciples. He was “walking on the lake” during a storm. In both cases, the disciples were in great fear—the first time because of the dangerous storm, the second because they thought Jesus was a ghost. These dramatic stories both show how God was building the faith of His disciples. He permitted them to sail into the middle of a fearful situation in order to stretch their faith.

# God Calling – 3/14/21

# God's Touch

Near, all broodingly near, as some tender motherbird anxious over its young, I am here.  I am your Lord, Life of your body and mind and soul - renewer of your youth.

You do not know all that this time of converse with Me will mean to you.  Did not My servant Isaiah say, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.  They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Persevere in all I tell you to do.  The persistent carrying out of My commands, My desires, will unfailingly bring you, as far as spiritual, mental, and temporal things are concerned, to that place where you would be.

If you look back over My Words to you, you will see that My leading has been very gradual, and that only as you have carried out My wishes, have I been able to give you more clear and definite teaching and guidance.

Man's ecstasy is God's touch on quickened, responsive, spirit-nerves.  Joy - Joy - Joy

Forget not all his benefits ... who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is   
renewed like the eagle's.  Psalm 103:2,5

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/15/21

# The Discipline of Dismay



As they followed they were afraid. —[Mark 10:32](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Mark+10%3A32)

At the beginning of our life with Jesus Christ, we were sure we knew all there was to know about following Him. It was a delight to forsake everything else and to throw ourselves before Him in a fearless statement of love. But now we are not quite so sure. Jesus is far ahead of us and is beginning to seem different and unfamiliar— “Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed” ([Mark 10:32](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10:32)).

There is an aspect of Jesus that chills even a disciple’s heart to its depth and makes his entire spiritual life gasp for air. This unusual Person with His face set “like a flint” ([Isaiah 50:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+50:7)) is walking with great determination ahead of me, and He strikes terror right through me. He no longer seems to be my Counselor and Friend and has a point of view about which I know nothing. All I can do is stand and stare at Him in amazement. At first I was confident that I understood Him, but now I am not so sure. I begin to realize that there is a distance between Jesus and me and I can no longer be intimate with Him. I have no idea where He is going, and the goal has become strangely distant.

Jesus Christ had to understand fully every sin and sorrow that human beings could experience, and that is what makes Him seem unfamiliar. When we see this aspect of Him, we realize we really don’t know Him. We don’t recognize even one characteristic of His life, and we don’t know how to begin to follow Him. He is far ahead of us, a Leader who seems totally unfamiliar, and we have no friendship with Him.

The discipline of dismay is an essential lesson which a disciple must learn. The danger is that we tend to look back on our times of obedience and on our past sacrifices to God in an effort to keep our enthusiasm for Him strong (see [Isaiah 50:10-11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+50:10-11)). But when the darkness of dismay comes, endure until it is over, because out of it will come the ability to follow Jesus truly, which brings inexpressibly wonderful joy.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We are not fundamentally free; external circumstances are not in our hands, they are in God’s hands, the one thing in which we are free is in our personal relationship to God. We are not responsible for the circumstances we are in, but we are responsible for the way we allow those circumstances to affect us; we can either allow them to get on top of us, or we can allow them to transform us into what God wants us to be.  Conformed to His Image, 354 L

# CCEL – 3/15/21

Perfect through sufferings.—[HEB. 2:10.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.10)

My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.—And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.—Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.—I looked on my right hand, and behold, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

[Matt. 26:38,39](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.26.html" \l "Matt.26.38). -[Luke 22:44](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.22.html" \l "Luke.22.44).[Psa. 116:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.116.html" \l "Ps.116.3). -[Psa. 69:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.69.html" \l "Ps.69.20). -[Psa. 142:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.142.html" \l "Ps.142.4).[Isa. 53:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.53.html" \l "Isa.53.3).

“Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” [2 Timothy 2:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.2.html" \l "iiTim.2.1)

Christ has grace without measure in himself, but he hath not retained it for himself. As the reservoir empties itself into the pipes, so hath Christ emptied out his grace for his people. “Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” He seems only to have in order to dispense to us. He stands like the fountain, always flowing, but only running in order to supply the empty pitchers and the thirsty lips which draw nigh unto it. Like a tree, he bears sweet fruit, not to hang on boughs, but to be gathered by those who need. Grace, whether its work be to pardon, to cleanse, to preserve, to strengthen, to enlighten, to quicken, or to restore, is ever to be had from him freely and without price; nor is there one form of the work of grace which he has not bestowed upon his people. As the blood of the body, though flowing from the heart, belongs equally to every member, so the influences of grace are the inheritance of every saint united to the Lamb; and herein there is a sweet communion between Christ and his Church, inasmuch as they both receive the same grace. Christ is the head upon which the oil is first poured; but the same oil runs to the very skirts of the garments, so that the meanest saint has an unction of the same costly moisture as that which fell upon the head. This is true communion when the sap of grace flows from the stem to the branch, and when it is perceived that the stem itself is sustained by the very nourishment which feeds the branch. As we day by day receive grace from Jesus, and more constantly recognize it as coming from him, we shall behold him in communion with us, and enjoy the felicity of communion with him. Let us make daily use of our riches, and ever repair to him as to our own Lord in covenant, taking from him the supply of all we need with as much boldness as men take money from their own purse.

# Word Live – 3/15/21

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

# Scripture Union – 3/15/21

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

# Today in the Word – 3/15/21

# Sarah - Leaving a Legacy

**Read:** [**Genesis 23**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23)

### **The Death of Sarah**

23 Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. 2She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her.

3Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23" \l "fen-NIV-575a" \o "See footnote a)] He said, 4“I am a foreigner and stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead.”

5The Hittites replied to Abraham, 6“Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.”

7Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. 8He said to them, “If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf 9so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you.”

10Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. 11“No, my lord,” he said. “Listen to me; I give[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#fen-NIV-583b)] you the field, and I give[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#fen-NIV-583c)] you the cave that is in it. I give[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#fen-NIV-583d)] it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead.”

12Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land 13and he said to Ephron in their hearing, “Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there.”

14Ephron answered Abraham, 15“Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels[[e](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#fen-NIV-587e)] of silver, but what is that between you and me? Bury your dead.”

16Abraham agreed to Ephron’s terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants.

17So Ephron’s field in Machpelah near Mamre—both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field—was deeded 18to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. 19Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. 20So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Genesis 23:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#en-NIV-575) Or the descendants of Heth; also in verses 5, 7, 10, 16, 18 and 20
2. [Genesis 23:11](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#en-NIV-583) Or sell
3. [Genesis 23:11](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#en-NIV-583) Or sell
4. [Genesis 23:11](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#en-NIV-583) Or sell
5. [Genesis 23:15](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+23#en-NIV-587) That is, about 10 pounds or about 4.6 kilograms

My grandma Ruby wrote her life story and titled it My Burden Bearer. The title points to the difficult life she endured—losing her mother when she was a child, suffering an unkind stepmom, becoming a single mom at a young age, living her early married years in a tiny cabin in rural Minnesota, and raising three children with cerebral palsy—one who died at the age of 5.

[T]ell to the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. Psalm 78:4

But the title of her autobiography also underscores her faith in God—the One who redeemed her, sustained her, and bore her burdens. Grandma Ruby died when I was in college. I am grateful for the record we have of her life so that my children, too, can learn from her legacy of faith. In Genesis 23 we read that Sarah has died at the age of 127. The text announces her death with little fanfare. Abraham’s mourning is mentioned, but not developed in detail: “Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her” (v. 2). The rest of the chapter explains the lengths to which Abraham had to go to obtain a proper burial place for her body.

Ephron the Hittite was willing to give Abraham a portion of land, but Abraham refused to accept the gift. He did not want to be indebted to Ephron or his descendants. So Abraham paid full price. He buried Sarah in the cave, where he also owned the surrounding field. Abraham’s acquisition of this land was not only an important means to properly honor his wife, but further evidence of God’s ability to bring His covenant promises to fruition and sustain His redemption plan from generation to generation.

>> Today is a perfect time to ponder what legacy you and I are leaving for the next generation. What will they learn from us and pass on? Each of our lives is a part of God’s bigger plan. We must remember that we are not building our own kingdoms. Rather, we are playing a tiny part in His.

### **Pray with Us**

Omniscient God, we find peace in trusting your plans. We rejoice that you have given us the privilege to serve you. Give us opportunities to pour into younger generations for your glory.

## BY Kelli Worrall

# Our Daily Bread – 3/15/21

# Caring Letters

 **Read:** [**1 Peter 2:4–10**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%202.4%E2%80%9310)

### **The Living Stone and a Chosen People**

4As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A4%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30405a)] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion,  
    a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who trusts in him  
    will never be put to shame.”[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A4%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30406b)]

7Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

“The stone the builders rejected  
    has become the cornerstone,”[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A4%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30407c)]

8and,

“A stone that causes people to stumble  
    and a rock that makes them fall.”[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A4%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30408d)]

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

9But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 Peter 2:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A4%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#en-NIV-30405) Or into a temple of the Spirit
2. [1 Peter 2:6](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A4%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#en-NIV-30406) Isaiah 28:16
3. [1 Peter 2:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A4%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#en-NIV-30407) Psalm 118:22
4. [1 Peter 2:8](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A4%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#en-NIV-30408) Isaiah 8:14

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession. [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%202.9)

Decades ago, Dr. Jerry Motto discovered the power of a “caring letter.” His research found that simply sending a letter expressing care to discharged patients who had previously attempted suicide reduced the rate of recurrence by half. Recently, health care providers have rediscovered this power when sending “caring” texts, postcards, and even social media memes as follow-up treatment for the severely depressed.

Twenty-one “books” in the Bible are actually letters—epistles—caringly written to first-century believers who struggled for a variety of reasons. Paul, James, and John wrote letters to explain the basics of faith and worship, and how to resolve conflict and build unity.

The apostle Peter, however, specifically wrote to believers who were being persecuted by the Roman emperor, Nero. Peter reminded them of their intrinsic value to God, describing them this way in [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%202.9), “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession.” This lifted their gaze to God’s great purpose for them in their world: “that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Our great God Himself wrote a book filled with caring letters to us—inspired Scripture—that we might always have a record of the value He assigns us as His own. May we read His letters daily and share them with others who need the hope Jesus offers.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How does reading the Epistles as caring letters help you receive God’s encouragement? How will you share the hope of God’s caring letters today?

Loving God, thank You for the caring letters in the Bible!

#### **Insight**

In [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%202.9), Peter gives four characteristics of the church followed by a purpose statement. The apostle tells members of the church what and who they are and then tells them what their identity is meant to do. The description of the church in 1 Peter is similar to the description of the people of Israel found in the Old Testament. The church is a chosen people (compare [Deuteronomy 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut%207.6)), a royal priesthood and a holy nation (compare [Exodus 19:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod%2019.6)), and God’s special possession (compare [Exodus 19:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod%2019.5)). These qualities allow the church to fulfill its mission: to “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” ([1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%202.9)).

# God Calling – 3/15/21

# Your Cross is You

Remember, you are only an instrument. Not yours to decide how or when or where you act. I plan all that. Make yourself very fit to do My work. All that hinders your activity must be cured.

Mine is the Cross on which the burdens of the world are laid.  How foolish is any one of My disciples who seeks to bear his own burdens, when there is only one place for them - My Cross.

It is like a weary man on a hot and dusty road, bearing a heavy load, when all plans have been made for its carriage.  The road, the scenery, flowers, beauty around - all are lost.

But, My children, you may think I did say, "Take up your cross daily, and follow Me."

Yes, but the cross given to each one of you is only a cross provided on which you can crucify the self of yours that hinders progress and Joy, and prevents the flow through your being of My invigorating Life and Spirit.

Listen to Me, love Me, joy in Me. Rejoice.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7