

June 2017

**GATEWAY DEVOTIONAL
REFLECTIONS OF CHRIST**

A Daily Devotional and Prayer Journal



**And we, who with unveiled
faces all reflect the Lord's glory,
are being transformed into His likeness with
ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
II Corinthians 3: 18.**

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Isaiah 62: 5(b)—“*as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.*”

Isaiah 61:10-11—“*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*”

Ephesians 5: 25-27—“*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*”

JUNE 1—Holy One of Israel

READ: Isaiah 49: 7-13

REFLECT: Yesterday at 6:00 p.m. began the Festival of Shavuot, Latter Firstfruits or giving of the Holy Spirit to the Body of Christ or the Church. Fifty days after the Resurrection, or Easter, Jews celebrate Shavuot, or Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. Prior to God sending the Holy Spirit to dwell *within* and seal those followers of Jesus in the Upper Room at Pentecost, God had sent His Holy Spirit to be *with*, or to *rest upon* people from time to time, especially His chosen ones, the Jews. But God could take away the Holy Spirit or remove His presence at any time. The Holy Spirit's presence was never permanent nor did it *indwell* God's people prior to Jesus' saving work at the Cross.

Formerly, in ancient times, the feast of Shavuot or Pentecost was celebrated by placing two loaves of leavened wheat bread in the Temple prior to the sacrifices being offered. This symbolized how sin had once again entered their lives. Within only a matter of weeks from the celebration of the first Passover, Early Firstfruits and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Jews had become disobedient and had allowed sin to fester and rise up within them again.

Since the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., however, it has become a celebration of the remembrance of the giving of the Law to Moses. It was at this time, following the deliverance of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, that God had given the Law to Moses at Mt. Sinai. At that time the Lord descended upon the mountain in the fire of His Shekinah glory. Exodus 19: 16-20.

During this time of celebration and remembrance of the giving of the Law, it is customary for Jews to read Ezekiel 1 in the synagogue. A reading of verses 1-4 is reminiscent of the events that occurred in the Upper Room on the first Pentecost of the Church when the Holy Spirit was given to Christian believers. Ezekiel witnessed powerful winds, flashing lightning, brilliant light and fire like glowing metal coming down from the heavens. Later, in Ezekiel 37, he would prophetically see God reviving the dead bones of the children of Israel when He (God) breathed new life into them and put His Spirit within them. Ezekiel 37: 1-14. This would be a foreshadowing of the giving of the promised Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers in the Upper Room. Luke 24: 49; Acts 1: 4-8. Although the majority of the Jews did not recognize the Holy One of Israel when He first came and sent His Holy Spirit to dwell within His people, God promises that He has saved for Himself, a remnant out of Israel. He will return to put His promised Holy Spirit within them. The Holy One of Israel never breaks His promises!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You have given me eyes to see and ears to hear the Gospel message and the faith to believe for salvation. Thank You, Lord, that from the moment I believed I was sealed with the Holy Spirit. Lord, help me to be a witness to the Jews who need to know that their Messiah has already come. Come quickly to them Lord. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" Revelation 22: 17, 20. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Ezekiel 1: 1-4; 36: 24-28; 37: 1-28; Zechariah 12: 10-14; 13: 1; Acts 2: 1-4.

JUNE 2—The Bridegroom

READ: Matthew 25: 1-10; John 3: 29-30; Revelation 19: 6-9

REFLECT: Jewish traditions for betrothal and marriage are symbolic in finite detail to what God desired to be representative of Christ's relationship with the redeemed, the corporate Church, or Body of Christ-followers. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom and the Body of Christ, or the Church, is His Bride. The engagement period or betrothal was initiated by the bridegroom and his father coming to the home of the bride to arrange a contract of marriage. God (the Father of the Bridegroom) sent Jesus His Son (the Bridegroom) to Earth (the home of the Bride) to arrange their betrothal. The contract was sealed and made secure by the bridegroom's father giving something of value to the father of the bride. God gave His Only Begotten Son to secure the marriage contract—it was signed in His blood. As the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the church at Corinth, *"I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him."*

I Corinthians 11: 2.

According to tradition, the bridegroom would then return to his father's house for at least a year. During this time, he would prepare a place where he would take his bride to be with him, following the wedding. Likewise, during this year, the bride would be preparing to meet her husband. After we were promised to Jesus, He returned to His Father's house to prepare a place for us, so that He could come to take us to be with Him. John 14: 1-6.

Wedding festivities would begin in the evening with a procession from the house of the bridegroom to that of the bride. The way would be lit with torches. Matthew 24: 1-10. The sound of the voice of the bridegroom coming for his bride was one of the most joyous of times in Jewish life. Likewise, the shout that comes from Heaven preceding Jesus coming for His Bride, the Church, will be the most joyous sound we will ever hear. John 3: 29; I Thessalonians 4: 13-18.

Following the consummation of the marriage on that first evening after the groom had taken the bride to his father's house, the festivities would continue with seven days of feasting and celebration. The time we, the Bride or Church, are in Heaven with Jesus during the seven year tribulation on Earth, is representative of this first week of the Jewish marriage. For the first year after the marriage, it was customary for the bridegroom to be with his bride, not having to go to serve in war. It was to be a year of peaceful tranquility. Just so, after the Tribulation, at the Second Coming of Jesus, we will come to rule and reign with Jesus as His Bride for the 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom Reign. This time will be the most peaceful that the earth has known since sin entered the Garden of Eden. What a day of rejoicing that will be when all the nations come to Jerusalem to worship and praise our Bridegroom—Jesus, the King!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that I am betrothed to Jesus as My Bridegroom and that I am part of His Body, the Church—Jesus' Bride. I thank You for the beautiful relationship You have established for every Christ-follower to be betrothed to Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Matthew 9: 15; 22: 1-14; Psalm 19: 1-5; Ephesians 5: 22-33.

JUNE 3—Husband

READ: Isaiah 54: 5; Matthew 22: 1-14; Revelation 21: 2; Ephesians 5: 22-33

REFLECT: Throughout the Old Testament, God is referred to as the Husband of the nation of Israel. Isaiah 54: 5. However, as God's wife, Israel is forever unfaithful, always having adulterous relationships with idols and other nations and their gods. But God remains faithful to her, always loving her no matter what, continually taking her back and forgiving her. The entire book of Hosea is a picture of God and Israel and their "marital" or covenant relationship. God constantly reminds Israel through the prophets that He will restore their relationship, forgiving Israel's infidelities. God forgives Israel and takes her back, time after time. Hosea.

Even in the parable of the wedding banquet given by the king for his son in Matthew 22, it could be said that the guests who were invited, but failed to attend, were reflective of the Jews, or the nation of Israel at Jesus' First Coming. After invited guests reject the invitation, the king proceeds to invite others who were initially not invited, possibly representing the Gentiles. At the end of the parable, one who attempts to attend without the proper wedding attire...the righteous robes of Christ...is thrown out from the banquet and refused entrance.

Coming to fulfill or restore the promised Old Testament covenant relationship destroyed by sin in the Garden of Eden, Jesus is referred to as the Husband of the Church, His Bride or Wife, in the New Testament. That restoration would be called the New Covenant. Any reference to the marriage relationship in the New Testament is said to represent Christ and the Church. Ephesians 5: 33. Husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, even giving up His life for her; and wives are told to submit to their husbands, "...as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5: 22-33; I Peter 3: 1-7.

Speaking now to women who possibly have never been married, or to those who have been married but may be divorced or widowed, or those who may have husbands but might be in abusive relationships, remember the Lord, Your Maker, He is your Husband! Isaiah 54: 5. Find great comfort in that thought. He will never leave you or forsake you; and, He will love you with an everlasting love! No matter what you are going through, male or female, if you are a Christ-follower and belong to Jesus, He will soon come to take you, or us...the Church...as His Bride. What a glorious day that will be, when we attend the wedding supper of the Lamb, and Jesus becomes our Husband! Revelation 22: 17.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that I am Your child and that Jesus is my Husband because I belong to the Bride of Christ, the Church. Father, wash over me daily to purify and cleanse me by the washing of the water with Your Word. Sanctify me Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Hosea 2: 16-23; Jeremiah 3: 14-15; I Peter 3: 1-7.

JUNE 4—The Holy Spirit

READ: Acts 2: 1-4; Isaiah 11: 2; Joel 2: 28-32

REFLECT: The Holy Spirit is one of the indivisible Persons of the Trinity, the Triune Godhead. Like God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, He is fully God and cannot be separated from the other two. The Holy Spirit always was, is and forevermore will be. The Bible says at Creation that the Spirit of God was “...*hovering over the waters.*” Genesis 1: 2. While some view the Holy Spirit as a spiritual force, referring to Him as “it”, He is not a “thing”. He is God in Spirit, the very presence of God, totally and completely, in every way.

Prior to Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, God would place His Holy Spirit “*upon*” or “*with*” people, or cause it to “*rest upon*” them. Numbers 11: 16-25; Isaiah 11: 2; 61: 1-2; Psalm 104: 29-30. However, at His will, it could be removed as mentioned in yesterday’s devotional. King David even expressed fear at one time that God would remove His Holy Spirit from him because of David’s disobedience. Psalm 51: 11. From the time of Jesus’ birth until Pentecost, the Spirit of God’s presence was “*with*” His people in the Person of Jesus Christ. During this time, Jesus repeatedly told His followers that He would never leave them alone, nor forsake them, but that His Father would send the Holy Spirit, the Helper, Counselor or Comforter to be “*in*” them, following His death, resurrection and ascension, One just like Him. John 14: 15-31.

After Christ’s ascension, on the Day of Pentecost, the promised Holy Spirit came to “indwell” true believers in Christ. All who had believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus and had repented of their sins were sealed forever that day, by the power of the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing their eternal life. From then on, anyone who would believe and be saved would be sealed and indwelled with this same promised Holy Spirit. Immediately, from the moment they believed, the Holy Spirit would come to live within their hearts, making them a new creation in Christ. Acts 2: 1-4; Ephesians 1: 13; 4: 30.

The power of the Living God, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, is available as a gift to anyone who will believe. As Jesus promised His disciples, the Holy Spirit would be there to sanctify and empower them to become more and more like Him. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would “*teach (us) all things*”, and “*guide (us) into all truth*”. John 14: 26; 16: 13. Through the seven ministries of the Holy Spirit, which include the presence of the Lord as Spirit, wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and reverent awe, or worship, God can sanctify us by the Holy Spirit, for and to, His glory. Only as we daily surrender to Him, dying to our selfish desires and giving the Spirit complete control, can God make the fruit of the Holy Spirit evident in our lives. Isaiah 11: 2; Galatians 5: 22-23.

PRAY: In prayer today, ask the God to show you which of the fruits of the Holy Spirit you allow to be made manifest in your life and which areas of your life you need to surrender to the sanctifying work of the Spirit so that you will be able to produce that fruit. Record your prayer and what you hear the Spirit tell you. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Romans 8: 9-14; John 1: 32; 14: 15-21, 23-26; 16: 5-15; I John 2: 27.

JUNE 5—Abba

READ: Mark 14: 36; Romans 8: 15-17

REFLECT: Abba is an informal Aramaic term for “father”. Used as a term of endearment by small children for their father, the English equivalent is “daddy”. About the time that children become more independent and start venturing out into the world, around adolescence, they usually begin to call their fathers “Dad”, instead of “Daddy”. But, prior to that time, they need the security and comfort of knowing that they can run to “Daddy” at any time, and he will protect them from the world. These are the years when the relationship between a father and his children is probably the most intimate and children trust in their father the most.

An example of how this name is primarily used by small children to refer to their fathers will be forever cemented in my own mind by a personal experience. My daughter, who is now 29, was twelve years old when her father passed away. While she was just at the age when she probably would soon have begun to call him “Dad”, she was not quite there yet. To her, he was still “Daddy”. Now, whenever she refers to him, she still calls him “Daddy”. That name is probably “frozen in time” for her. Similarly, the more we are sanctified and become more like Jesus, possibly we will each, as Christ-followers become more trusting of our heavenly Father and be comfortable calling out to Him as Abba or Daddy. Scripture tells us that we are the children of God and that His Kingdom is such as these little children. The more we trust Him with child-like faith, the more we should be free to call Him Abba. I John 3: 1-3; Matthew 18: 1-4.

If you have ever noticed, when little children begin to get tired, or they feel like they are in danger or trouble, they come to their daddies and crawl up onto their laps. Whenever they can't handle things and there looks like there is “no way out” of their predicaments, they know “Daddy” will most likely rescue them.

In His humanity, Jesus must have felt that way in the Garden of Gethsemane. As He went off by Himself to pray, He fell to the ground and crying out, said, “*Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.*” Mark 14: 36.

Knowing that He would soon suffer and die, taking the sins of the whole world upon Himself, and then be separated from His Father because of the sin, He had come to the bitter end. He knew that if there was a way out, His Father would provide one. But, deep within His heart, He knew that there was no alternative; but, His Father was still His Abba, His Daddy, and He (God) would eventually restore Him (Jesus) and bring Him home to Heaven. Hebrews 12: 2.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that I can call You “Abba”. I thank You that I am Your child. Thank You that no matter how old I am, whenever I feel insecure and as if I need protection, I can always run into Your loving arms and You will be there for me as My Abba—My Daddy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Galatians 4: 6; John 1: 1-13.

JUNE 6—Priest Forever

READ: Hebrews 5: 6

REFLECT: Hebrews 10: 11-18 says, *“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, for after He had said before, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,’ then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.”*

The tribe of Levi formed the priesthood, and God chose Aaron to be the first High Priest, appointing Aaron’s sons to be the heirs to that position. As the High Priest, Aaron would enter the Holy of Holies one time per year to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the nation of Israel to “cover” their sins until the next year when the sacrifice would have to be repeated. Exodus 28: 1. In Hebrews 5: 4, we learn that priests were not chosen by the people but were especially appointed by God to come from this tribe and Aaron’s line. God also appointed His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Priest, but He appointed Him to be that Priest forever! Jesus did not claim to be God for personal gain or acclamation, but considering His deity to be as nothing, He knew why He had come and He accepted His position as our Priest forever with great humility. Hebrews 5: 4-9.

What is the significance of Jesus being our Priest forever? Prior to Jesus’ sacrificial death, there were many priests who stood and offered sacrifices day after day for the individual sins of the people. These sacrifices never really took the sins away but were an act of obedience to the duties of the law that would bring about a state of temporary forgiveness from God. Moreover, because the priests themselves were sinful, they first had to offer sacrifices for themselves. This system was an endless, flawed cycle.

However, after Jesus came, all of this changed. Hebrews 7: 26-28. Because Jesus came to be our Priest forever, we no longer have to go to a priest with an animal in tow to be sacrificed for our sins in order to receive forgiveness. We no longer have to approach God according to the dictates of the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. Hebrews 7: 12-19. Not only that. Hebrews 10: 16-18 tells us that once our sin is forgiven through Jesus our Priest, not only are we forgiven but God remembers our sins no more. Praise God that we have access to Jesus as our Priest...anytime, anywhere, for anything!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that once I became a Christ-follower, Jesus became My Priest forever! I thank You that His sacrifice was sufficient and that He stands before Your throne, forever interceding for me. Help me to never take His sacrifice for granted. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 110: 4; Hebrews 10: 11-12; Leviticus, chapters 1-27.

JUNE 7—El Elyon (The God Most High)

READ: Psalm 57: 1-3; Deuteronomy 32: 7-12; Luke 8: 26-33; Genesis 14: 17-24

REFLECT: Kay Arthur says in her book, *Lord, I Want to Know You*:

“El Elyon is the name that designates God as the sovereign ruler of all the universe. It was El Elyon, “God Most High”, who delivered Abraham’s enemies into his hands. Genesis 14: 20. It is the God Most High who was and is the Redeemer of Israel. Psalm 78: 31-35. And it is the God Most High who rules today over the affairs of men.

Isn’t it easier to give thanks when you realize that your Father, El Elyon, God Most High, is in control and that nothing can happen in His universe without His permission? Because El Elyon rules supremely over all, we can understand how all things ‘work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose’. Romans 8: 28. In everything you can, ‘give thanks’ for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. I Thessalonians 5: 18.”

The same El Elyon who created the heavens and the earth also has complete control over our lives. Because God is sovereign, we can trust Him with every aspect of our lives. Each Scripture passage listed above and below depicts another aspect of God’s sovereignty.

Recall the account of Joseph. Genesis 37-50. Because he recognized God’s sovereignty in his life, despite all that he had been through, he was still able to say to his brothers, *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”* Genesis 50: 20. No matter how desperate Joseph’s circumstances looked from time to time, the God Most High had a sovereign and greater plan. Do you feel God’s sovereignty at work in your life? Would you be able to call Him God Most High? Do you **allow** Him to be sovereign in your life?

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You are God Most High and that You are sovereign over my life and the happenings in all the heavens and on the earth. Help me to daily entrust every aspect of my life into Your care, knowing You are sovereign and there is no one higher or more powerful than You, El Elyon, my God Most High. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 46: 1-7; 83: 13-18; 91: 1; 97: 9(a); Acts 16: 16-18; Mark 5: 1-13.

JUNE 8—Restorer

READ: Psalm 23: 3; I Peter 5: 8-11

REFLECT: Psalm 23: 1-3:

*“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want,
He makes me to lie down in green pasture,
He leads me beside still waters,
He restores my soul.”*

What a picture of peace! To “*restore*” someone or something means to return it to a previous condition or place, to repair or renovate it, or to bring it back to the original starting place. When God is referred to as Restorer, what is He restoring? What does the 23rd Psalm say to you?

Before sin entered the world through the first man, Adam, man walked in perfect harmony with God in the Garden of Eden, enjoying a beautiful and unbroken fellowship. But our God is a Holy God and He cannot be in the presence of sin. So, sin broke our relationship with God. In fact, it totally destroyed it. Sin leads to death and eternal damnation, or separation from God. Sin caused all of mankind to be broken and diseased, forever laboring to be “*restored*” to the place where we had been before sin entered the picture—back to a rightful relationship with the Lord. However, it would take man a long time to come to the realization that he himself could not restore mankind to the relationship with God that we had enjoyed prior to sin. Anything that man would ever attempt to do could never be enough. Restoration required a perfect sacrifice for payment of the debt owed by sin. That restoration would require the death of God’s Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ—the only one Who has ever been perfect and without sin. Through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we can be “*restored*” to a rightful relationship with God and look forward to eternal life with Him forever. By repenting of our sin and asking Jesus to be our Restorer, the debt for our sin can be paid in full. Through Him we become new creations, children of God and co-heirs with Christ. All things are made new and are “*restored*”. Our relationship with God that was eaten away by the locusts of sin could be made right again. Through Jesus, the second Adam, sin has been done away with.

Although we will have to struggle with our fleshly, mortal and decaying bodies until we die an earthly death, we can look forward to the “*restored*”, glorified bodies we will have when we finally see Jesus face-to-face. Until then, we can only reflect by how we live that we have been “*restored*”. Like an old, decrepit, tumble-down building that has been restored, we will have to put an “historical landmark” sign outside of these earthly temples made of dust. That “landmark” sign is the fruit of the Spirit that we display in our lives, the fruit that is the sign that says, “Temple of the Living God, bought and paid for by the blood of Christ. Building completely restored to the original use that it was intended for—the dwelling place of God.” If you are a Christ-follower, have you allowed God to restore and renovate every part of your life? If not, what area needs to be demolished and restored to their original, God-purposed and intended use?

PRAY: Quietly and prayerfully go before the Lord today and ask Him to restore your soul. Record your thoughts and prayer. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

JUNE 9—Hiding Place

READ: Psalm 32: 1-11; Colossians 3: 1-4

REFLECT: In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom writes about her incarceration experience under the Nazi regime in Germany during World War II. A secret room had been built in her family's home, and it served to hide Jews during the Holocaust. However, once the Nazi's elite S.S. discovered that the ten Booms were helping run an underground operation that served to hide Jewish refugees from them, Corrie and her family were shipped to concentration camps. At the camps, Corrie did not have a secret room to hide in. She was exposed to dreadful conditions with no physical way of escape. It was during this time that Psalm 32: 7 took on a different meaning to Corrie. Even though a physical structure could not provide a retreat from the conditions she was in, God was her Hiding Place no matter where she was.

Just like Corrie, as Christ-followers, He can be our Hiding Place as well. But, in the same sense that the Jews hiding in the ten Boom household had to **enter** the secret room in order for it to be their hiding place, we must enter into God's presence in order for Him to be our Hiding Place. In the presence of God, we have shelter from the enemies known as pride, selfishness, anger, fear, impatience and the like.

We have to make a choice each day to either rest in our Hiding Place or to run from Him. Think of how Jonah fled when God instructed him to go to Nineveh. However, instead of escaping trouble, Jonah found trouble when He ran away from God. Remember God's comforting Word found in Psalm 32: 8, "*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.*" This is a promise from our Almighty, Loving God who is our Hiding Place.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that I have a place in You that I can run into and hide. Lord, help me to seek You first and foremost as my place of refuge and not run after and seek protection in the things of the world or in others. Thank You that I do not need to weather the storms of life by myself, but I have You as my Hiding Place. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Jonah 1: 1-17; Isaiah 45: 2-3; Psalm 91: 1-16.

JUNE 10—Ruler of God’s Creation

READ: Revelation 3: 14

REFLECT: Jesus is the source of all creation. Think about the intricacy of the human body. Every organ works in perfect conjunction with the others...our hearts beat steadily to keep us alive, and the slightest electrolyte imbalance can throw our heart into an arrhythmia. The same God who created the complex human body is in control of every aspect of your life. The same God who controls the climate, ocean tides and the symbiotic relationships seen in nature has His hand on your life. With the promises of His love and sovereignty in His Word, how can we think for a moment that God has neglected any area of our lives?

We all can be quick to look at our circumstances and forget how big God is. We often forget that God has a purpose for the good times as well as the bad. The following is an excerpt from a Charles Stanley devotional that emphasizes this point.

“When we ponder the deeper teaching of Scripture, it’s important to start with the Lord’s character and promises. For example, in meditating on the fact that He does permit some extremely hard times, it is critical to remember, God is good. (Psalm 145: 8-9). His purposes are good, as is everything He does; God is sovereign (Psalm 103: 19), so there is nothing that is outside of His control: God promises believers that He will work things together for good. (Romans 8: 28). God keeps His promise. (II Corinthians 1: 20). These facts form a filter through which we can seek to understand the Lord’s presence in every situation.”

Consider Joseph. Betrayed by his brothers, falsely accused by his employer’s wife, and imprisoned unjustly, he was powerless and, in many ways, forgotten. But he refused to be swayed by circumstances. He grasped the deeper truth that God had orchestrated it all for good. Whether the Lord sends a trial or permits one, He has said He will use it as part of His plan for our good. Romans 8: 28. Do you believe Him? When times are tough, remember God’s omniscience. As in Joseph’s situation, what may have been perceived as a bad situation, God meant for good. He is ultimately the Ruler over all of creation. Genesis 50: 20.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You have a plan for my life as it fits in Your Kingdom purposes and that You had that plan in mind before You even created the world, the heavens, the earth and everything in them. I thank You that Your ways and thoughts are so far above my own and that You are indeed, the Ruler Over All Creation and that in and through Jesus, everything that is made has been made through You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Colossians 1: 15-18; I Corinthians 8: 5-6; Psalm 139: 1-24; 103: 19; Genesis 1: 1-31; 50: 15-20.

JUNE 11—Bishop of Souls

READ: I Peter 2: 25

REFLECT: Before receiving God’s free gift of salvation and accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, every Christ-follower is as a sheep that has gone astray. Isaiah 53: 6-7. We wandered aimlessly, lost in our sin. Upon conversion, however, we return to Our Shepherd, the Bishop of our souls. Another word for bishop is overseer. So, Jesus is the Bishop or Overseer of our souls, just like a shepherd oversees each sheep of his flock.

Jesus is not the kind of overseer that neglects His people, not even for a moment. Not a second goes by in each of our lives when we are not under His watchful eye. Jesus laid down His life for us, physically and spiritually. We were undeservingly bought for the precious price of His shed blood unto death...literally. Romans 5: 6-8; I John 3: 16. He loved us enough to die for us, and He loves us enough to watch over and direct our lives.

However, God cannot force us to submit to His guidance. The act of returning to the Bishop of our souls is a voluntary one. We can choose to do our own thing and miss out on the amazing blessing that God has in store for us. We can make decisions based on our feelings instead of on what God is telling us to do. We can forge ahead full force instead of waiting on God’s perfect timing. Or, we can submit to God and trust Him with our lives...our souls.

Even when we cannot make sense of our circumstances, if we allow God to be our Bishop, we can be assured that He is in control. God knows our wants, circumstances, desires and our fears. Nothing is hidden from Him. Psalm 139: 1-24. As Our Shepherd and Overseer, Jesus leads and guides us down the best path that God has specifically designed for each and every Christ-follower. But we will only walk down that Divine path as we surrender to the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit that resides within every Christ-follower. The path that God desires to set before each of us is not just a good path. It is the best path. It is an excellent path. Even when all we can see is our current circumstances, God can see the big picture. Never fear for a second that He is not with you. Our Bishop will never leave you nor forsake you. Jeremiah 29: 11 says, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* If His eye is on the sparrow, you know He watches over you! Matthew 10: 29.

PRAY: In prayer today, consider a verse from an old hymn *“His Eye Is On The Sparrow”* and thank God that Jesus is the Bishop of your soul if you are a Christ-follower.

*“Why should I feel discouraged and why should the shadows come?
Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home?
When Jesus is my portion, a constant Friend is He,
His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me.”*

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 139: 1-24; John 10: 11-18.

JUNE 12—Anointed One

READ: Daniel 9: 24-26; Luke 4: 14-21; Isaiah 61: 1-3

REFLECT: To “*anoint*” means “*to consecrate, to make sacred*” or “*to set aside for a special purpose*”. In Scripture, an anointed one is someone who is ascribed power because God is with Him. One day in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus stood up and read from the scroll of Isaiah. In doing so, He spoke of Himself as the fulfillment of prophecy, as the One anointed by God “*to preach good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners.*” Isaiah 61: 1.

While priests and kings, along with the Temple and the articles used in it, were anointed with oil throughout the Old Testament period, this was only an outward symbol showing that God had set them aside to be consecrated unto Him for His special, holy purposes. Unless those anointed would totally surrender their will to that of the Lord, the anointing was of no value. The power of God displayed through them was in direct proportion to their obedience to Him. Even though David had been anointed by God to be king, during a time of his disobedience, He expressed fear that God might even remove His Holy Spirit from him. Psalm 51: 1.

Jesus, the perfect, sinless, guileless Son of God, was the only Anointed One who could ever totally and completely submit His will to that of God the Father. The special purpose for which He was anointed was the salvation of sinful man. The true display of His submission to the will of God was fulfilled in His death on the Cross—a death that brought the offer of the gift of salvation and eternal life to all of mankind...a free gift to all who would believe and receive. Following Jesus’ death and resurrection, God’s anointing would then be given to those who believed in His Son, repented of their sin and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. From the day that they each believed, they would be “anointed” with the Holy Spirit, sealing them and guaranteeing their eternal life forever. Ephesians 1: 13-14.

Even though the anointing of those who belong to Jesus is forever, God’s power from the anointing is still in direct proportion to their obedience and submission to God’s will. Only if we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us will God’s power be displayed. In Acts 4: 26-27, Peter and John prayed for a special anointing and for boldness and power to preach the gospel. Realizing that the power was of the Lord, they spoke of how even the power that Herod and Pilate had had over Jesus at His trial, was only because God had allowed it to fulfill His plan of redemption. Acts 10: 34-48 gives another example of how Peter’s anointing with the Holy Spirit was so complete that the Holy Spirit came in great power upon the Gentiles listening to his preaching. If you are a Christ-follower and belong to Jesus, you have been anointed with the Holy Spirit...but, the question remains...do you allow His anointing power to be displayed in your life to His glory?

PRAY: Consider the question above prayerfully today, asking God for guidance and help in submitting to the will and plan He has for you so that His anointing power will be displayed in your life ...to His glory alone. Record what the Holy Spirit tells you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 23: 5; II Samuel 2: 4; Acts 4: 23-33; 10: 36-38.

JUNE 13—Heir of All Things

READ: Hebrews 1: 1-4; Ephesians 1: 7-14; Psalm 2: 6-9

REFLECT: Jesus is the One and Only-Begotten Son of God. Hebrew 1:6. He was the firstborn over all creation. Colossians 1: 15. This does not mean that Jesus was the first person to physically walk on this earth. Rather, it means that He holds the right to inherit all of creation. As part of the Triune Godhead, Jesus created this world and there is nothing that is not subject to Him. John 1: 1-4; Hebrews 1: 10; 2: 8. For many, it is difficult to see God in everything around them, and therefore it is often difficult to believe that He made everything and will inherit all things. But, God promises in His Word that no one has an excuse for not knowing Him because, as it says in Romans 1: 20-21, *“For since creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

When Scripture says that Jesus is the Heir of All Things, the reference is particularly in regard to this world as it will be in its future state of perfection when everything has been restored in the New Heaven, the New Earth...in the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21: 1-7; Acts 3: 19-21. One day God’s creation will exist once again in perfect harmony with Jesus Christ as our head. Ephesians 1: 9-10. One thing that God the Father longs for is unity within the Body of Christ. God created us and Jesus Christ inherits us. Jesus Himself said in John 10: 27-30, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”* And, furthermore, in reference to every Christ-follower, Jesus said in John 17: 1(b)-4 and 9-10, 12(a), *“Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do...I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them...While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”* What a beautiful thought for every Christ-follower! Not only are we co-heirs with Jesus Christ, but we belong to Him as part of His inheritance. Romans 8: 15-17. We belong to Him---the Heir of All Things!

PRAY: In prayer today, ask God to reveal to you what it means as a Christ-follower to have *“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...”* Thank God that You belong to Jesus—the Heir of All Things. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Colossians 1: 1-18; Hebrews 2: 5-9.

JUNE 14—Root of David

READ: Revelation 5: 1-10; Isaiah 9: 6-7; 11: 1-2

REFLECT: The Root of David, or Son of David, was a common title used in Jesus' day to refer to the Messiah. Principally, the "religious" Jews of this time period believed that the Messiah would be merely a man and not divine, so this title aligned more with their frame of reference. However, Jesus would use this title, the Son of David, when speaking with a group of Pharisees to express His deity. Referring to Psalm 110: 1, Jesus asked them how they could say He was the Son of David, when David had said in speaking of the Messiah, "*The Lord said to My Lord...*" Luke 20: 41-44. Jesus was asking them, if the Messiah would simply be David's "son", how could David refer to Him as "*Lord*"? If their hearts had not been hardened, these Pharisees should have been able to see that Scripture directly pointed to the divinity of the Messiah. They would have known that He would be fully man **and** fully divine.

In Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, the "royal" lineage from King David is in direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Isaiah 9: 7; 11: 1; II Samuel 7: 16. God had promised David that a king would reign in holiness from his throne forever. Because of the disobedience of the Israelites, however, the line of kings from the Davidic tribe of Judah would become a fallen dynasty by the time of Jesus' birth. But, God would raise up from David's "root" or "stump", the King of Kings or Messiah who would rule in righteousness from David's throne forever. Jeremiah 23: 5-6. While Jesus' First Coming at His birth partially fulfilled this prophecy, when Jesus returns at His Second Coming to physically rule and reign from David's throne in Jerusalem during His Millennial Kingdom reign, the prophecy will have been fulfilled completely. Although Jesus was not literally the son of His earthly father Joseph, He was his "legal" heir; and, therefore, He became of Joseph's legal lineage so as to inherit the throne of David. Ironically, the very Law that Jesus came to fulfill, and to put an end to the effect of, would ascribe to Him, as an adopted son, every right and privilege that would be given to a natural son. Through Jesus, all Christ-followers would be given the same opportunity to become adopted sons of God and co-heirs of Christ, receiving the same inheritance that Jesus has. At another time during Jesus' ministry, a Gentile woman from the area of Tyre and Sidon referred to Jesus as the Son of David. Through the faith of this Canaanite woman, Jesus showed His disciples that He came as the Messiah, first to the Jew and then to the Gentile. Although she was not even a Jew, let alone from the tribe of Judah, she was afforded a place in the family of God as an adopted child, grafted into the Root of David. Jesus demonstrated through her that He had come as the Messiah to anyone with a saving faith. To all who would receive Him and believe in His name, salvation would come. Through the Root of David, eternal life would be offered to the whole world. Matthew 15: 21-28.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that because of Jesus, I have been grafted into the Root of David and have been adopted into Your family. As David once said, it is beyond my understanding, Lord, why You would even consider me. Thank You, Father, for Your great love shown to me through the sacrifice of Your Son Jesus—the Root of David. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Psalm 8: 4.

FURTHER STUDY: Romans 1: 1-4; Matthew 1: 1, 6, 16; 12: 22-23; Jeremiah 23: 5.

JUNE 15—Exceedingly Great Reward

READ: Genesis 15: 1; 14: 22-24; I Corinthians 2: 9; Colossians 3: 23-24

REFLECT: In Genesis 14, we read that invaders plundered Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram's nephew, Lot, who resided in Sodom, was taken with the plunder. In retaliation, Abram gathered the men of his household and together they retrieved all that had been taken, including Lot. The king of Sodom offered Abram a reward...all the goods that had been recovered...for this act of heroism. Observe Abrams' response to this offer of a reward:

"I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me to Aner, Eshcol, Mamre. Let them have their share." Genesis 14: 21-24.

After all of this happened, God said to Abram, *"Fear not, Abram. I am thy shield, thy exceedingly great reward."* Genesis 15: 1.

Abram was a man of faith. Hebrews 11: 8-12. He refused the gifts offered by the king of Sodom, and he received an even greater reward. The temporary provisions that the king of Sodom offered did not even tempt him. He knew that nothing on this earth could even remotely compare to a relationship with God. Abram knew He is our ultimate Reward.

At times, God asks us to take a similar stand for Him. He may ask us to give up an immediate, tangible reward in exchange for something less tangible that doesn't immediately gratify. Others may question us because what God calls us to do is often counter to what culture or society would tell us and may not make sense financially. Often our personal lives probably stand in stark contrast to the lives of those not living for God. But, God rewards a life lived in obedience to Him. Be assured of that. There are many distractions in this world that vie for our attention. But, God is all that we need. Not only does He provide our needs by giving us a great reward; He IS our Reward. Seek Him. Do not be afraid and filled with worry regarding things in your life that you cannot even control. The words that the Lord spoke to Abram are true to us as Christ-followers as well: *"Fear not...I am thy exceedingly great reward."* Genesis 15: 1.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that I do not have to chase after other things of this world in order to receive rewards, but that You are my Reward. Father, I thank You that through Jesus I have been reconciled to You and that I will be with You for the rest of my life, now and for all of eternity. Help me to live my life in a way that is most pleasing to You. Thank You that, even though I am absolutely undeserving, You still have loved me so much that You have rewarded me with eternal life and abundant life here and now. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Lamentations 3: 22-26; Psalm 23: 1-6; 73: 25-26; Matthew 25: 21; Romans 2: 6; Galatians 6: 9.

JUNE 16—God of My Fathers

READ: Daniel 2: 20-23; Deuteronomy 6: 3-9

REFLECT: When I think about this name for God it brings to mind, and makes me very thankful, for the rich heritage I have in the Lord through the influence in my life of my Christian father, grandfather and great-grandfather. Having been able to even know and attend church periodically with my great-grandfather at an early age, I know and have been the recipient of the blessings that are promised by God to families who, as Deuteronomy 6: 1-9 explains, teach the ways of the Lord to their children. Through their dedication and commitment to pass their faith in Jesus Christ down to their children and be an example to their children of what it looks like to “*love the Lord you God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*”, a firm foundation came to me through their obedience to help me to set my feet on the right path so that I too would one day love the Lord and come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

At the same time that I thank God for my “fathers” of the Christian faith in my own family, I think about those who have not had fathers who knew the Lord, nor would be able to set a godly example for them so that they would desire to know Jesus. However, I do thank God that because of His great **love for the whole world**, everyone is given the opportunity to know God as their heavenly Father and receive His free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Matthew 7: 11 says, “*If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*”

Often, as I count my blessings, I even think about the blessings God has given me by allowing me to be born in the nation that He has. I pray that God will once again restore this nation to its original foundation, established by our founding fathers, many of whom were strong Christians. As we think about the blessings or cursings that are put in motion by our earthly fathers, may it be a time when we all commit to being strong, Christian examples, not only to the children in our families, but to all those who are lost around us. May God the Father use us to plant seeds of the Gospel within their hearts so that they develop a desire to know and receive Jesus Christ, His Son, as their Lord and their Savior; and then, know God as their heavenly Father. If you do not have children yourself, ask the Holy Spirit to show you today, who He has put in your path to be a spiritual father or mother to, and ask God how you are to help them establish a rich eternal and saving heritage in Jesus Christ and enjoy God as their heavenly Father. Record your thoughts.

PRAY: Today as you close in prayer, pray for our nation that we would return to the foundation established by our founding fathers and once again be “one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all”...in Jesus’ name. At the same time, meditate upon one of the stanzas from our National Hymn titled, “*God of Our Fathers*”, by Daniel C. Roberts and George Warren. II Chronicles 7: 14.

“God of our fathers, whose almighty hand, leads forth in beauty, all the starry band...of shining worlds in splendor through the skies. Our grateful songs before Thy throne arise.”

FURTHER STUDY: Genesis 31: 22-42; Matthew 7: 7-11; James 1: 17.

JUNE 17—Peace Offering

READ: Leviticus 3: 1-5; Romans 5: 1-2

REFLECT: One purpose of the Old Testament “peace offering”...also known as the fellowship offering...was to thank God and to seek fellowship or communion with Him. At other times, peace offerings were to be made to back up a prayer of supplication. If someone was seeking something or desiring mercy, he or she would complement that request with a peace offering. Today, however, it is not through the sacrifice of an animal, but through Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross that we receive mercy, grace and an answer of receiving His peace to our prayers. When we come to Jesus with honesty and reverence, seeking Him and His peace, the Holy Spirit will fill us and we can be assured as He gives us “*peace*”, that He is in control and that He will answer our prayers in accordance with His perfect will.

In addition, peace offerings of thanksgiving were offered when mercy was received. These were offered in grateful acknowledgement for what God had done. Hebrews 13: 15 states, “*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess His name.*” There should not be a day that goes by where we do not take time to thank and praise God. Even when circumstances seem dim, God deserves our praise because He has a purpose far beyond our current situation. Philippians 4: 11-13. More than sacrifice and offerings, God wants us to bring praise to Him through our lives and our obedience to Him.

If you are a Christ-follower, do you ever thank God for bringing peace into your life by restoring your relationship with Him through the shed blood of Jesus Christ? Do you ever consider that the peace that we often experience as Christ-followers is because the peace that we have is not the same peace that the world has, but our peace is a “*peace that passes all understanding.*” Philippians 4: 6-7. Or, do you ever even experience the peace in your life that only Jesus can give? If you don’t, is it because you have a half-hearted attitude towards fellowship with God in your life? Consider that Christ Himself is our Peace Offering. Ephesians 2: 13-18. If you have faith in Jesus Christ, you have peace with God as well as a restored fellowship with Him. Romans 5: 1.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Your love and Jesus’ obedient and willing sacrifice of His own life has brought me a “*peace that passes all understanding.*” I thank You for sending Jesus as a Peace Offering so that my relationship with You could be restored... forever bringing me peace. Thank You for allowing difficult circumstances in my life so that You could stretch and grow me to know that true peace can only come through a right relationship with Jesus Christ. May my life be daily offered up to You as a sacrifice of praise for bringing me peace. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Ephesians 2: 13-18; Colossians 1: 19-20; Philippians 4: 4-9.

JUNE 18—Father

READ: John 14: 1-18; 17: 1-5, 20-26; Romans 8: 15-17

REFLECT: Today is Father's Day, so it seems appropriate that we take a look at God as Our Father. During the Old Testament period, and even in Jesus' time, it was unusual to speak of Jehovah God as "Father". Sin had completely separated man from the intimate relationship that he had enjoyed with God in the Garden of Eden. Also, the fear and reverence of the Lord was so great that it was even forbidden to speak His name period, let alone call Him "Father". He seemed distant and unapproachable. Only the High Priest could even enter into His "presence" in the Holy of Holies once a year to offer a sacrifice for the forgiveness of the sins of the nation of Israel.

God the Father is one of the three persons of the Trinity, the other two being God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Although the Trinity still remains a mystery in many ways, we need to believe by faith, that each Person of the Triune Godhead is, in and of itself, unique and distinctive in purpose, but, inseparable from the others, each being fully and completely God.

"*Father*" was the most favored name that Jesus had for God. He used it over 200 times in His reference to Him in the four Gospels, and taught us how to pray, addressing God as "*Our Father*". Matthew 6: 8-15. How wonderful that, because of what Jesus did for us that day at Calvary, if we belong to Him, we too, can call God, "*Father*". John 17: 1-5, 20-26.

How sad that so many people are deceived in their thinking, believing that their salvation is secure, even if they have never repented of their sins and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. I'm sure you've heard many say, "We are all God's children", or, "I'm going to Heaven because I was raised going to church and my parents are very 'religious'." However, God does not have grandchildren. Jesus Himself said, "*The only way to the Father is through the Son.*" John 14: 6. Only if you have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus have you become a child of God and you can now call Him "Father." Then and only then will you be going to that special place in Heaven where Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us, so that where He is, you can be also. John 14: 1-6.

Although we all have had different experiences with our earthly fathers, some good and some not so good, we all have been given the opportunity to have a heavenly Father. God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son that "*whosoever*" believes in Him might be saved, have eternal life, be His child and be able to call Him "Father". Is God your Abba, your Daddy, your Father? If you cannot say that He is your Father with any assurance, find out today, on Father's Day, how He can become your Father. Ask one of the pastors or other leaders at Gateway how you can be a child of God and be able to call Him "Father".

PRAY: Father God, I praise You and thank You that I can call You "Father"...that You are my Abba...my Daddy. I thank You and praise You for Your great love for me and that I can truly say that I am Your child. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Galatians 4: 1-7; Isaiah 9: 6; John 1: 1, 14, 18.

JUNE 19—Son

READ: I John 4: 12-15; John 10: 22-39; Colossians 1: 9-20

REFLECT: God the Son, the incarnation of God, or God in the flesh, is one of the three persons of the Triune God. Also known as Jesus Christ, the Son of Man or the Son of God, He was the visible image of the invisible God, the Word of God made flesh. Like God the Father, so much about God the Son remains a mystery to us; however, because the Son was obedient to the Father and came to earth to perfectly show us the way to God, to show us God and His love, we can more easily understand the perfect will of God and His plan for our salvation. Because He came and dwelled among us, and was tempted in every way as we are tempted, but was still without sin, obedient unto death, we can better envision the restorative relationship that God has in mind for us.

As the Son of Man, fully human and yet fully divine, we can see how Jesus was able to bear the punishment of sin as a perfect substitute. Because God has established us as children of earthly parents and has placed us in families, we can better understand the sacrifice that was made on our behalf to redeem us from our sins. While this is not true for everyone, most people know about, or understand, the unconditional love that a parent has for their child. As the Bible says, while we may consider the sacrifice of our own life for the life of a righteous man, there is no possible way we could ever conceive of offering our own life for an unrighteous one, let alone sacrificing the life of our child; but, yet while we were all wretched sinners, God so loved the whole world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him would have everlasting life. Romans 5: 6-8; John 3:16.

As the Son of God, Jesus is of such infinite worth that He is able to completely atone for our sins. The Son, the one and only God-Man, left His throne room in Heaven to come to earth to make the Word of God, literally, come alive! Jesus Christ, the Son, was, and is, the spokesman for God, the One who would make God the Father's perfect will known to all of mankind. Because He was "the Son", the Firstborn of many brothers, He provided a way that we could also become sons and daughters of God. Through the blood of Christ, the Son of God, we have the right to be adopted into God's family. We can become co-heirs with Christ, inheriting everything that the Son has inherited. Such thoughts are too wonderful for us to imagine or even begin to understand with our human, finite minds; but, because of Jesus, the Son, we know it is possible. I John 5:13. The Son has made a way for us to be reconciled to God the Father. Jesus told Philip, "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*" John 14: 9. What an incredible promise! Do you know the Son? Have you spiritually seen Jesus in your heart unto salvation? If you have, you have seen God the Father! John 14: 7-9.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You for sending Jesus Christ, Your Son, that He might become that perfect sacrifice that was necessary to redeem all of mankind from our sin. I thank You that because of Jesus the Son, I became Your child. Thank You that I can call Jesus my Brother. In His name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Hebrews 1: 1-14; 2: 10-18; Isaiah 9: 6; Matthew 12: 46-50; 16: 13-17.

JUNE 20—Creator of the Ends of the Earth

READ: Isaiah 40: 28; Genesis 1: 1:1-2: 3; John 1: 1-3, 14; Acts 17: 24-28

REFLECT: In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them, the other two Persons of the Trinity were there taking part, showing that the fullness of God in all three Persons has always been, is and will forevermore be. Psalm 48: 14. At the beginning of Creation, Genesis 1: 2 says that the Spirit of God “*was hovering over the face of the waters,*” while Job 33: 4 says, “*The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*”

The story of Creation tells over and over how God “*spoke*” Creation into being. So by God’s Word...the actual word that He spoke...everything came into being. Each Scripture reference describing the act of Creation says, “*God said,*” and then that particular created thing came into existence. John 1: 1-3 says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,*” while John 1: 14 says, “*The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.*” So, the passages from John tell us that Jesus Christ was present during Creation, while other New Testament passages tell us that He, in fact, did the creating. Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1: 15-16. When God said in Genesis 1: 26, “*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness,*” He meant that every part of His Being went into our Creation...Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Malachi 2: 10; Ephesians 3: 9; Psalm 104: 30.

So, when the Creator of the Ends of the Earth tells us to love Him with all our hearts, all of our minds and all of our strength, He wants us to love Him back, putting our “everything” into our relationship with Him, just as He did for us. God created us for His glory and to enjoy Him forever; however, sin came into the picture, destroying that relationship. “*This people I have formed for Myself, they shall declare My praise.*” Isaiah 43:7, 21.

But, God had a perfect plan in place, also from the beginning, to restore the relationship with Him that He had originally meant for us to have. Through every part of His Being, the Creator God became Our Restorer. Through the **love of God the Father**, the **death of His Son, Jesus Christ**, and the **sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit**, we are being restored to a right relationship with Our Creator. What a Mighty God we serve!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that in You alone, we “*live, move and have our being*”. Help us always to be like Job, who said, “*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*” Job 1: 20-22. Lord, help us to remember that everything we have is a gift from You...the most precious thing being our eternal life. Without You we have, and are, nothing. As Paul said in I Timothy 6: 7, “*(For) we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*” Thank You, though, that as a Christ-follower, I can depart this world, knowing that I have everything in my future...an eternal life spent with You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Ecclesiastes 12: 1-7; Job 1: 20-22; 33: 4.

JUNE 21—Our Confidence

READ: Proverbs 3: 26; I John 5: 14; Hebrews 4: 16

REFLECT:

*“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
Though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
Though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.*

Habakkuk 3: 17-18.

“Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him.”

Job 13: 15.

Confidence is a faith or belief that someone will act in a right or proper way. From confidence in someone, a relationship of trust and intimacy develops such that certainty of behavior can be relied upon. No greater confidence or trust can be displayed in someone than the confidence that both Habakkuk and Job spoke of in the above two passages. No matter what happened to either one of them, they still knew that the Lord would never leave them nor forsake them.

While these two men had such a great confidence in the Lord, Numbers 14: 8 is an example of God’s people not having any confidence in Him...even though He had done great and mighty things for them. After God had brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, freeing them from slavery and supernaturally parting the Red Sea to safely allow them to escape from the pursuing Egyptian army, they still grumbled and complained. Even though God’s miraculous provision supplied them with daily manna from Heaven as they wandered through the desert for forty years, they still did not have the confidence to believe that if God had promised them the Land, He meant it, and they could have the utmost confidence in Him doing what He said He would do, no matter what the overwhelming obstacles were that they faced. Yet, when they sent twelve men into the Promised Land to “spy” out the situation, only two came back with a “confident” and good report. The other ten only saw giants and insurmountable obstacles. Even though Moses tried to convince them by saying, *“If the Lord is pleased with us He will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us,”* they still did not have enough “confidence” in the Lord to believe He would deliver them from their enemies. Numbers 14:8. After witnessing miracle after miracle, they still doubted and were filled with disbelief.

After examining these different instances of the people of God either having, or not having, confidence in what the Lord could do, where do you stand? Do you have “confidence” in horses and chariots, or do you trust in the name of the Lord your God? Record your thoughts.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You for all of the times in my life when You have stretched forth Your mighty hand to save me from death and destruction...especially as it concerns my eternal life. Lord, help me to always have confidence in what You can do, not trusting or being confident in my own strength or wisdom. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Galatians 5: 10; II Corinthians 3: 4-6; Hebrews 4: 16.

JUNE 22—Meek and Gentle One

READ: Matthew 11: 28-30; II Timothy 2: 23-26

REFLECT:

*“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.”*

Isaiah 53: 7

The above passage describes the meekness by which Jesus, the Messiah, went to His death on the Cross of Calvary. Jesus’ meekness set an example after whom we are to model our own behavior as His disciples. Can you even imagine exemplifying this same behavior if you had been asked to bear the sins of the world by going to your death on a cross? Also, look at how Jesus did not defend Himself before Pilate. Matthew 27: 11-14. Pilate was “*astounded*” that Jesus did not defend Himself. Would that have been your reaction, or would you have tried to defend yourself and exclaim, “What do you mean, accusing me like this? Don’t you know that I am perfect, that I am the Son of God? I think I will call down legions of angels to deal with you!” Sadly, even though I am a Christ-follower and Jesus is my Lord and Savior, I know I would have had a word or two to say in my defense. Even though my love for a friend might cause me to die for them, I, most likely, or most definitely, would not do it willingly, or without a statement before the press! As sinful mankind, we tend to do the exact opposite of how Christ would respond in many situations. Our selfish natures and purposes always need to be dealt with, even when we belong to Jesus.

*“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*

Isaiah 53: 6.

This passage describes us and why Christ had to go to the Cross in meekness and gentleness, completely surrendering His will to that of the will of God His Father. When the Holy Spirit takes up residence within the heart of a Christ-follower, He has His work cut out for Him! If we are to ever exhibit the fruit of the Spirit of meekness, or gentleness, we **must** abide in Christ, the Vine. Only by abiding in Him and surrendering our will to that of God’s can we ever display or reflect this characteristic of Christ. John 15: 4-8.

Remember that God always uses the least to confound the wise. Jesus said, “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*” Matthew 5: 5; Psalm 37: 11. Surrender to God’s will and see how He will give you the words should you need to “defend” yourself, in meekness and gentleness. With man nothing is possible, but with God, “*all things are possible.*” Luke 18: 27.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You, that Jesus willingly went to the Cross to die for me and that He didn’t try to defend Himself or cancel the amazing plan of salvation that You put in place. Help me, Lord, to model the meekness and gentleness that Jesus did when He willingly died for the sins of the world. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Matthew 5: 5; 26: 51-54; 27: 11-14; Galatians 5: 23; Ephesians 4: 1-6.

JUNE 23—Strong Lord

READ: Psalm 89: 8 NASB; Jeremiah 50: 34

REFLECT: Psalm 89: 9 provides a great description of our Lord's strength: "*You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.*" The sea is most likely one of the greatest forces in nature, yet our Strong Lord has the power to still its waters.

In Psalm 89: 10, the name Rahab is a reference to Egypt. With His strong arm, the Lord dispersed and scattered the Egyptian army that was pursuing the Israelites, drowning them in the sea as He brought His people safely through the Red Sea and onto dry land. In Psalm 89: 12, Tabor and Hermon are references to mountains in Canaan. God created these mountains with His mighty hand. His creation alone, should remind us of His omnipotence and cause us to praise Him because the same God who created these mountains is in charge of our lives.

We should never fear what the world can do to us. First John 4: 4 reminds us, "*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*" Perhaps you are in a situation right now that you feel incapable of handling. Maybe God has called you to do something that requires stepping out of your comfort zone and taking a leap of faith. Or, perhaps you feel like the enemy is attacking you on all sides.

Remember that our adequacy comes not from our own strength, but from the strength of the Almighty God that lives in us. The same God who performed the feats mentioned in the above paragraphs is with you. Deuteronomy 31: 6-8. This is the same God who was with David as he battled Goliath and who was with Daniel in the lion's den. The same God who walked on water and calmed the raging sea is with you today as a Christ-follower. Call on His strength, have faith in Him and you, too, can move mountains in Jesus name! Matthew 17: 20.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You for Your strength and that when I am the most weak, that is when You can show Yourself the most strong in my life. Help me to not try and face any situation in my life in my own strength but to always look to You, My Strong Lord, to support me and give me strength. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Mark 4: 35-41; Daniel 6: 18-27; I Samuel 17: 1-58.

JUNE 24—Chief Among Ten Thousand

READ: Song of Songs 5: 10; Philippians 2: 9-10; Colossians 1: 15-18

REFLECT: “*Chief*” refers to a “*leader, ruler*” or the “*head of a group or organization*”. The “*chief*” is the most important, the one having supreme authority or rank. In other words, the Chief Among Ten Thousand is the “best of the best”. Jesus is the Chief Among Ten Thousand...He is preeminent over all Creation. Colossians 1: 18.

Several places in Scripture refer to Christ as the Chief Cornerstone. Psalm 118: 22; Matthew 21: 42; Ephesians 2: 20; I Peter 2: 6. As such, He is the support or foundation upon which everything is built. In Him, all things hold together. Colossians 1: 17. In I Peter 5: 4, Jesus is called the Chief Shepherd. He is the One we should always follow, the model for everything, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. We should always keep our eyes upon Him, for He is the “*radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being...*” Hebrews 1: 1-4.

As Psalm 45: 2 says,

*“You are the most excellent of men,
And your lips have been anointed with grace,
Since God has blessed you forever.”*

As we follow the example of Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to sanctify us and make us more and more like Him, we need to remember that His preeminence came from His humility and His sacrifice. Even though He was perfect and without sin, owing nothing, He died for the sins of the world, submitting to the perfect will of God, His Father. As a result, He received the right to be called the Chief Among Ten Thousand. “*..and, once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.*” Hebrews 5: 9.

Only because He took on the very nature of a servant, being obedient unto death on a cross, “*...God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” Philippians 2: 9-10. He above all Creation deserves to be called the Chief Among Ten Thousand. Jesus, there is none like You. You are the best of the best!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus is the Chief Among Ten Thousand. I thank You that He is my All in All and that one day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord ...the Chief over everyone and everything. I thank You that because of Your great love and His obedience unto death, every one of my enemies has to bow at His name, too. In His powerful, precious and Chief name...the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

“Better is one day in Your courts than thousands elsewhere.” Psalm 84: 10.

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 8:1; 45: 2; Hebrews 1: 3; 5: 9.

JUNE 25—Shiloh (Peacemaker)

READ: Genesis 49: 10; John 16: 33; Proverbs 16: 7

REFLECT: *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between His feet,
Until Shiloh comes.”—Genesis 49: 10*

The above passage is part of the paternal blessing that Jacob gave to his son Judah. This blessing was prophetic because it established the lineage of the kings of Israel through which David, Solomon and, finally, Jesus, the King of Kings, would come. Shiloh was the city in which the Israelites set up the Tabernacle and where the Ark of the Covenant resided when they first came into the Promised Land. Shiloh means “Peacemaker”. God was present with His people at Shiloh in the Tent of Meeting; but, later, due to the wickedness and idolatry of the Israelites, God’s presence would leave this city. Because of their sin, God allowed the Philistines to destroy Shiloh and seize the Ark. Later, after David established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and returned the Ark of the Covenant to the Tabernacle, the presence of God would return. However, sin would once again cause God’s presence to flee from the Temple in Jerusalem in the years to come. Ezekiel, chapters 8-11.

Any limited relationship between God and His people that the law had brought about would be destroyed by sin, over and over again. A “peaceful” reconciliation and right relationship with God could not be established until “the” Peacemaker, or Shiloh would come. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, the only one ever perfect and without sin, would be the only Peacemaker who would be able to bring about reconciliation between God and man. Until He would come, the only available remedy for sin would be a strict compliance with the law, which was unattainable by sinful man. Sin had made mankind enemies of God and at war with Him. Romans 5: 10.

The Good News is that Shiloh has come and through Him, we have been reconciled to God. Peace has been declared. As Romans 5:10 says, *“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”* Reconciliation came through Jesus’ death, but through His life has come a new life in Christ, a right relationship with God, freedom from slavery to sin and the power of the Holy Spirit, to name a few blessings. Through Shiloh, the Peacemaker, we can have an abundant life so peaceful that Proverbs 16: 7 says, God can even make our enemies be at peace with us. Remember, even though Shiloh, or Jesus, already came once and returned to His heavenly Father, sending the “*peace*” of the Holy Spirit to live within every Christ-follower, He has promised to return again soon to take us to be with Him forever. John 14: 1-6. Hallelujah, what a Savior...Jesus...Shiloh, Our Peacemaker!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus came to give us “*peace*”, not as the world gives, which is only fleeting or temporary, but a lasting and perfect “*peace*”. Thank You that I have been reconciled to You because He is my Peacemaker. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Ephesians 2: 14; Colossians 1: 19-20; Philippians 4: 6-7.

JUNE 26—Father of Mercies

READ: II Corinthians 1: 3; Lamentations 3: 22-23

REFLECT: Mercy is showing or giving favor or compassion when it is undeserved. In the case of our heavenly Father of Mercies, “mercy” is His forgiveness of our sins, when we are so undeserving and unworthy. Although we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, yet He still, in His mercy, tells us that, “Everyone *who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.*” Romans 10: 13.

Our God is infinite in His mercy, and to us it seems unfathomable that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5: 8. But God’s ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are so far above our thoughts, who can understand Him? Isaiah 55: 8-9.

The mercy of our Father flows out of His great love for us. “*For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*” John 3: 16. If you are a parent, you have probably encountered those times when your children seem so unlovable, yet there is almost nothing that they could do that would make you stop loving them. I have heard some parents tell their children, “While I don’t like what you are doing right now, I still love you.”

That’s how it is with God. He created us. He made us and gave us life. He knows every inch of our being. If we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, no matter what we do, He looks upon us and says, “What sin?” As our Creator God, He says, “*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.*” Romans 9: 15. As King David said, “*What is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*” Psalm 8: 4.

If you have had a loving, compassionate and merciful earthly father, it is easier to understand God as our Father when we are relating to mercy and love. Having received undeserved love and mercy from your earthly father, you can better relate to your heavenly Father. Scripture tells us, “*How great is the love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called children of God?*” I John 3: 1. However, if you have not experienced mercy and love from an earthly father, there is no better time than now to know and accept the love and mercy that your heavenly Father wants to give you. He longs to bestow His love and mercy upon you and to call you His child. If you have never accepted Christ as Your Lord and Savior, do so now. Go to Him; He is the Father of Mercies and He desires to offer you the free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ His Son.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You loved me so much that You were willing to pour out Your mercy and grace upon me through the sacrifice of the life of Your Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to forgive my sin. I am so undeserving and unworthy Lord... You are a good, good Father. Thank You that Your mercies are new every morning. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 25: 6; 51: 1; 89: 1; Titus 3: 5; James 2: 13; Daniel 9: 18-19.

JUNE 27—Ointment Poured Forth

READ: Song of Songs 1: 3; Proverbs 27: 9; Ecclesiastes 7: 1; John 12: 1-8

REFLECT:

*“For Your love is better than wine.
Because of the fragrance of good ointments,
Your name is like ointment poured forth.”—Song of Songs 1: 2(b)-3*

Proverbs 27: 9 says that perfume and ointments are a delight or joy to the heart. In the passage listed above, the references to ointment are the same as a perfume or fragrant oil, rather than as an ointment that would be used as a medicine. While the Song of Songs passage is symbolic of our love relationship with the Lord, it is also a prophetic reference to the Blood of Christ being poured forth for our salvation. No more pleasing or sacrificial offering would ever be made than that of the love of God being poured forth from the Cross through the life-blood of His Son.

When Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, anointed Jesus’ head and feet with the alabaster flask of spikenard, she was performing the ultimate act of worship. While it is doubtful that she realized the symbolism in this action, it was an anointing with the same type of spices and oils that would soon be used to embalm Him. The value of the ointment or perfume that she used was the equivalence of a year’s wages; and, one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, their treasurer, expressed his disdain that she would “waste” this oil, when the money should have been given to take care of the poor. John 12: 1-8.

However, Jesus rebuked him, explaining that her act of love and worship demonstrated her realization of who He was. She was showing that nothing was too good for her Lord, the Son of God. Jesus Christ, the name above all names, would soon be the Ointment Poured Forth at Calvary for the sins of the whole world. Acts 4: 12; Philippians 2: 9-10. Indicating that His death was imminent, He told him that they would always have the poor with them, but He would not be with them much longer.

The prostitute from Galilee who anointed Jesus’ feet with the fragrant oil of spikenard, also shed her tears upon His feet. While her action was one of love and worship, the tears shed were those of repentance. Jesus responded to her act by saying, “*Your sins are forgiven,*” and, “*Your faith has saved you, go in peace.*” Luke 6: 36-50. Little did she know that the ointment she was pouring forth out of a love for Jesus, was a foreshadowing of the love of her Lord that would soon be the Ointment Poured Forth to save, not only her, but, the world from sin. From then on, anyone with a repentant heart that would believe in the name of Jesus would have the Ointment of Salvation poured out upon them. Romans 10: 9-13.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus willingly spilled His blood as an Ointment Poured Forth to cleanse me and heal me from my sins. Use me, Lord, as a drink offering, that You can pour forth into the lives and faith of others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Luke 6: 36-50; Matthew 26: 6-13.

JUNE 28—Our Resting Place

READ: Jeremiah 50: 6-7; Revelation 14: 13; Hebrews 4: 3

REFLECT: Although our “ultimate” resting place, if we are a child of God, is with Him for eternity, when referencing God as Our Resting Place while on this earth, Scripture refers to a “spiritual” rest that only can come from knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Finding the “rest” that only He can give involves being able to trust in God’s providence and care.

Throughout the Old Testament, the disobedience of God’s chosen people caused them to frequently leave or abandon Him as their “resting place”. As Isaiah 30: 12 conveys, “*In repentance and rest is your salvation; in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would not have it.*” In Isaiah 57: 20, God says, “*But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.*” I don’t know about you, but whenever I allow the sins of worry and anxiety to get hold of me, I feel as if I have left the “resting place” that I find in the Lord.

God continually tells us to “*cast our cares upon Him for He cares for (us)*”, but our lack of faith often keeps us from doing that. For some strange reason, we feel that we are better able to take care of problems in our own strength and might more so than God is able. I Peter 5: 7; Matthew 11: 28-30. Oh, we of little faith!

The fast paced world that we live in requires us to daily seek the Lord as Our Resting Place. Unless we do just that, we will keep spinning our wheels and wasting valuable time that could be put to better use in furthering God’s Kingdom. His yoke truly is “*easy*” and His burden is “*light*”. Matthew 11: 30.

When Moses was leading the Israelites to the Promised Land, he knew that unless God’s presence went with them, they would not find “rest”. He knew that without trusting in Him, they would be wandering in the wilderness forever. When Moses said that they did not want to go unless God went with them, God told him, “*My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*” Exodus 33: 14. So, remember to always ask God to go with you, no matter what your undertaking is, and He will give you rest. If you do not have peace about what you are doing, and are unable to find “rest”, you are probably operating outside of God’s will and He is not your Resting Place. If you belong to Jesus, ultimately, no matter what comes your way, nothing can separate you from the love of God, even death. And, should death come, you will enter into your eternal rest with God and be in His presence forever! Hallelujah, what a Savior! Romans 8: 39.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You are my Resting Place. No matter what my situation or circumstances look like, or how heavy my burden and cares seem to be, help me to always rest in You and to cast my cares upon You because You desire to take care of me and be my Resting Place. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Isaiah 57: 19-20; Psalm 23:2; 116: 7; Exodus 33: 12; Matthew 11: 28-30.

JUNE 29—The King in His Beauty

READ: Isaiah 33: 17; I Corinthians 13: 12

REFLECT: We can speculate, but until we get there, we will not fully understand what Heaven is like. We can imagine the pearly gates, the streets of gold and conversations with Peter, Paul and Moses. But, the most amazing part of Heaven will be seeing King Jesus in all of His beauty and glory!

We may catch glimpses of the King in His Beauty here on earth, but these brief images pale in comparison to seeing Him face-to-face. Paul expresses this idea in I Corinthians 13: 12: *“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”*

What makes our King beautiful is not what the world considers to be beauty, i.e. a beautiful appearance or perfect physique; but, what makes our King Jesus beautiful are the very things that Jesus showed Thomas in John 20: 24-29...the nail marks in His hands and feet...the hole in His side where He was pierced. These things about His appearance show the beauty of our Lord because they show His love for us as demonstrated in His sacrificial death on the Cross.

Jeremy Camp sings a song called *This Man*. Here are some lyrics from that song that exemplify the beauty of our King that is so contrary to what the world considers to be beauty.

*“In only a moment truth was seen and revealed this mystery,
The crown that showed no dignity He wore,
And the King was placed...for all the world to show disgrace,
But only beauty flowed from His face.”*

A commentary from www.enduringword.com says, *“In Zechariah 12: 10, it’s as if Jesus is speaking prophetically of the day when the Jewish people, finally turned to Him, see Him in glory: “Then they will look on Me, the One they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves bitterly for a firstborn son.” Zechariah 13: 6 continues with this thought: “If someone asks Him, ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ He will answer, ‘The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.’”*

Jesus’ beauty was demonstrated on the Cross. And, one day, we will see Him in His Beauty. Not in the way we stereotypically envision beauty. His beauty is His sacrificial love, His grace, His mercy and His compassion. Have you beheld Jesus in His beauty?

PRAY: Take time today to consider what the beauty of Jesus’ sacrificial death means to you and write a prayer to thank Him for that sacrifice. Ask Him in that prayer to show you His beauty in all of its glory more and more in your earthly and daily life as a Christ-follower. Ask Him to help you live your life so that others will catch a glimpse of His beauty through you. Pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Zechariah 12: 10; 13: 6.

JUNE 30—Chosen or Precious Stone

READ: I Peter 2: 4-10

REFLECT: Jesus is either a Precious Stone to those who believe in and receive Him, or “*a stone of stumbling*” to those who refuse to believe in Him. I Peter 2: 7-8. To believers there is nothing more “precious” and secure than Christ, the Rock, upon which they can build their one true foundation, both for this earthly life and their eternal life to come.

To those who reject Christ and stumble on the Precious Stone, the gospel of our salvation, the judgment of the wrath of God will fall. The *MacArthur Study Bible* note to I Peter 2: 7 says, “*Judgment of unbelief is as divinely appointed as salvation by faith.*” While God does not appoint them to unbelief, their disobedience of unbelief causes God to appoint them unto judgment.

Jesus said in Matthew 21: 44, “*And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.*” Just like a clay pot, if the pot falls on a rock or stone, it crumbles into pieces. In reverse, if the rock or stone falls upon the pot (i.e. judgment), it is similarly destroyed. So, to unbelievers, whether your rejection of Christ is open and blatant, or apathetic in nature, the resulting judgment is the same, eternal separation from God forever. But, as Christ-followers, not only do we have the promise of eternal life, but the Holy Spirit is polishing and refining us so that **we** will come out as “precious gemstones” to the Lord...living stones, fit for the Master’s use. Malachi 3: 16-17; Zechariah 9: 16; I Peter 2: 4-5.

When referring to Jesus as the Precious Stone, most men would probably and automatically think of a rock, or building and foundation stone. However, because “diamonds are a girl’s best friend”, women might first think of a precious gemstone when thinking of this name. Because I am a woman, I think of the gemstone first and that brings to mind the praise song with the following words:

*“Lord, You are, more beautiful than diamonds,
Lord, you are, more costly than gold;
Lord, you are, more precious than silver,
And nothing I desire compares to You.”*

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus is both a sure foundation stone, solid and secure **and** a precious treasure valued more than a gemstone. Lord, I thank You that Jesus is not a “*stone of stumbling*” to me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Isaiah 8: 13-15; Matthew 21: 42-44.

