

GATEWAY DEVOTIONAL
October 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.**

**GATEWAY DEVOTIONAL
AND PRAYER JOURNAL**

OCTOBER 2017

Jeremiah 1: 19—

“They will fight against you but will not overcome you for I am with you and will rescue you,’ declares the Lord.”

II Corinthians 10: 3-6—

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”

OCTOBER 1—El Shaddai (Almighty or All-Sufficient One)

READ: Genesis 17: 1-8; 28: 3; 35: 11; 49: 25; Exodus 6: 2-9; Romans 4: 19-21

REFLECT: The first time that God referred to Himself in Scripture as El Shaddai was in Genesis 17, when He spoke to Abram at age 99 to reaffirm His covenant with him. At this time, God changed Abram's name to Abraham, adding the Hebrew letter "*He*" to Abram. This letter is part of God's name "*Jehovah*", and signifies God's breath or life-giving power. Although to the eyes of the world and to himself, Abraham appeared to be beyond the physical capability of producing an heir, God was telling him that He was God Almighty, the One who could "sufficiently" provide everything needed to allow His covenant to be fulfilled—Abraham would be made the father of many nations, a number beyond counting. Romans 4: 19-21; Genesis 12: 1-3.

The Hebrew word "*El*" means "*might*" or "*power*", and "*Shaddai*" is believed by many to mean either "*Almighty*" or "*All-Sufficient One*". The Hebrew root word "*shad*" literally means "*woman's breast*", and Andrew Jakes, in his book, "*The Names of God*", believes that this interpretation most appropriately fits, from the perspective of God being "*all-sufficient*". Jakes points out that when a baby is born, the mother's breast milk "sufficiently" supplies everything that the baby needs to sustain its life. In much the same way, Jakes explains that Christ, as the "*shad*" or breast, is the "*pourer forth*" or "*shedder*" pouring out His blood and shedding His Spirit abroad in our hearts to provide everything we need to "*sufficiently*" sustain our life, both temporally and spiritually. He believes when Jesus said, "*Come unto Me and drink*", that He was saying that He was El Shaddai—the Almighty and All-Sufficient One. John 7: 37-38. And when Jesus told believers to "*eat of His flesh and drink of His blood*", He was signifying how He would supply everything that we need as Christ-followers, if we would only "*abide in Him and He in us*". Only then could He be the Almighty and All-Sufficient One, if we would but allow Him to fill us with His Spirit. Elmer L. Towns, in his book, "*365 Ways to Know God*", says that El Shaddai is such a beautiful picture of the "*sufficiency*" of God. He notes that the name is both a picture of the tenderness and nurturing that comes from the comfort a baby receives while suckling from its mother's breast, and the powerful strength that comes from the Almighty God delivering us from the destruction caused by our sin. Whatever we might need, God's grace is "sufficient" for us, for in our weakness, He is shown most strong. He is El Shaddai! II Corinthians 12: 9-10.

Jesus is, to me, El Shaddai when I consider that His blood is not only "sufficient" to forgive my sins and erase them away from His memory at the point of my salvation; but, it continues to wipe them away until I see Him face-to-face and am glorified. Hebrews 10: 16-18; I John 1: 7, 9. Also, I find great comfort in knowing that Jesus said I should not "*worry*" for anything, because He knows of my needs and He is All-Sufficient to provide for me. Matthew 6: 25-34.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus is El Shaddai—both Almighty and All-Sufficient. You provide for me in every way, not only for my spiritual needs for my salvation but for the needs for my body and soul as well—All Sufficient in every way! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: John 6: 53-58; 7: 37-38; I John 1: 7, 9; II Corinthians 3: 4-6; 12: 9-10.

OCTOBER 2—Atonement

READ: Leviticus 16: 1-23; 23: 26-32; I Corinthians 15: 21-22; Romans 5: 1-21

REFLECT: I Corinthians 15:21-22—

*“For since by one man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”*

Through the fall of the first man, Adam, sin entered the nature of all men, forever separating them from fellowship with God. Because God is Holy, He cannot be in the presence of sin. But, not only would sin cause man’s spiritual destruction, breaking his fellowship with God for eternity, but it would bring about his physical death, too, forever leaving him in the fires of hell.

During the Old Testament period, God called Israel unto Himself, setting it apart as His nation, one to which He would offer reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins through the substitutionary sacrifice of the blood of innocent animals. Deuteronomy 7: 6-11. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies to make a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin for himself, his family, the tabernacle and the nation. For the nation of Israel, this would be a day of Sabbath rest, a day on which they would “*afflict their souls*” for the remorse of their sin, hoping that the sacrifice would be sufficient to “*cover*” their sin for one more year. The Hebrew word for atonement is “*kippur*” or “*kaper*”ing, which means “*covering*”. On the Day of Atonement, the nation would also fast. Furthermore, because “*...it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins,*” ultimately, God’s plan of redemption for the sin of man would later be perfectly fulfilled in the sacrificial and substitutionary death of His Only Son, Jesus Christ. In Him there would not only be the “*covering*” of sin, but its complete obliteration. Hebrews 9: 11-15; 10: 4, 14-18. Jesus would stand as the perfect Atonement for all of our iniquities. By repenting of our sin and asking Him to be our Savior—Our Atonement—our sin would be vanquished and our fellowship with God restored.

Research revealed that using the word “atonement” to describe what Christ’s sacrifice meant was an invention of William Tyndale, a Christian martyr of the 16th Century, who translated the 1526 English Bible. “*Atonement*” is a combination of “*at*” and “*onement*”, and means not only “*at one with*”, but “*at one with and a little something more.*” In attempting to describe Christ’s sacrifice, “*reconciliation*” was the word that had been used. “*Reconciliation*” is derived from a Latin word that is a combination of the root words “*re*”, meaning “*again*”; “*con*” meaning “*with*”; and “*sella*”, meaning “*seat*”. So, “*reconciliation*” means “*to be seated with again*”. However, Tyndale felt that the word “*reconciliation*” limited the whole meaning of Christ’s sacrificial death because it did not incorporate either the idea of “*propitiation*” or “*forgiveness*”. As a result, he concluded that “*atonement*” better “*fit the bill*” in translating. What Christ did on the Cross for us was certainly ***above and beyond*** “*a little something more than making us at one with God*”! In reconciling us to God, He took care of the very root cause for the broken fellowship with Him—our sin! The shed blood of Christ—what a perfect “*At-Onement*”!!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus’ sacrificial death has made me “*at one with You again, Lord*”. I thank You that Jesus has “*seated me with You again*”. In His name. Amen.

OCTOBER 3—High and Lofty One

READ: Isaiah 57: 15

REFLECT: God is the High and Lofty One Who lives in a high, holy and lofty place. At the same time, He is also with those who are contrite and lowly in spirit. He is not so far away from us that He cannot encourage and revive those on earth who seek Him in humility. The fact that God is the High and Lofty One should also remind us of His sovereignty, His greatness and His majesty. We do not serve a God who lacks power or who lacks anything. Psalm 135: 5-7; Romans 11: 36; Acts 17: 24-25. He is perfect and He is holy. He alone is worthy of our worship. God wants us to understand His greatness and majesty and to honor Him for who He is. II Thessalonians 1: 3-12. We are not to simply know that God is High and Lofty. Even Satan knows that. James 2: 19. Rather, we are to live lives that reflect that understanding.

One way to express our appreciation and understanding of God's majesty is to worship Him. C. S. Lewis provides in his book, *Reflections on the Psalms*, pp. 93-95, an interesting perspective on our response to God's majesty:

“Just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: ‘Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think that was magnificent?’ The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. My whole, more general, difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can’t help doing, about everything else we value... I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed.”

If we are in awe of who God is, of His high and lofty position, then our natural outward response should be one of praise. We are not to stifle our praise. He wants to hear our praise...not because He needs to, but because He delights in hearing the praise of His people. John Piper emphasizes this *point* in his book, *Desiring God*: “*God is not weak and has no deficiencies. (Romans 11: 36; Acts 17: 25) Everything that exists owes its existence to Him, and no one can add anything to Him that is not already flowing from Him. Therefore, God’s zeal to seek His own glory and to be praised by men cannot be owing to His need to shore up some weakness or compensate for some deficiency.*” God is high and lofty. He is great and majestic. He desires our praise, not to boost His own ego, but because He wants us to delight in Him!

PRAY: Father God, You are High and Lofty and I desire nothing more than to be in Your presence. I praise You, Lord, because You are sovereign and over all things. I also praise You because I can rest securely in safety because I belong to You and, because of Jesus, You have already seated me with You in the heavenly realms where You are High and Lifted-Up and the train of Your robe fills the temple with glory. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen. Ephesians 2: 4-7; Isaiah 6: 1-4.

FURTHER STUDY: Isaiah 6: 1-5; Acts 17: 24-28; Romans 11: 36.

OCTOBER 4—Our Hope

READ: I Timothy 1: 1; Titus 2: 11-14; Colossians 1: 27

REFLECT: Hope is almost always equated with some expectation in the future. But, Christians are unique in that their *hope in the future* is based on *eternity past*. Jesus Christ, who is Our Hope has existed forever and has no beginning or end. He is the Alpha and the Omega. God's plan to save men from their sins has always been in existence and is nothing new. It's even "older than the hills", as some might say, because Jesus, Our Hope, *existed before* Creation.

"The MacArthur Study Bible('s)" note to I Timothy 1: 1 says, "Christians have hope for the future because Christ purchased salvation for them on the cross in the past, sanctifies them through His Spirit in the present, and will lead them to glory in the future." Our Hope in Jesus is the glory that awaits every Christ-follower.

Have you ever heard anyone answer a question by saying, "I don't know, but I hope so"? They are not sure. They don't feel confidence with any degree of certainty. While the word "hope" for many people carries with it a feeling of uncertainty, with Christ-followers, "hope" *is* a certainty of the future—an absolute assurance that they will enjoy eternal life with God. I John 5: 12-15. Our Hope carries with it a confidence that cannot be explained because the Holy Spirit lives in us, guaranteeing our future until the Day of Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1: 11-14.

The primary reason that we have this "hope" is because of the grace of God through which we have received the gift of salvation. Being justified by our *faith*, which is also a gift, and then imbued with the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are blessed with a peace through which we experience Our Hope of glory, "*Christ in (us), the hope of glory.*" Colossians 1: 27(c). Once we have this "hope" through faith, our sanctification can proceed. Our Hope in our future with Jesus gives us not only the desire to see Him face-to-face, but the desire to become more and more like Him. I John 3: 2, 3. Our Hope in this eternal and heavenly future is the reason we do not have to fear death because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. II Corinthians 5: 6-8. Because of Jesus, we have a reason to give...for the Hope that we have! I Peter 3: 15.

PRAY: Today in prayer, meditate upon the 1st and 3rd verses to the old hymn by Edward Mote and Wm. Bradbury, "*The Solid Rock*", thanking God for Our Hope that we have in Jesus. "*My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly trust on Jesus' name. His oath, His covenant, His blood, support me in the whelming flood; when all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.*"

FURTHER STUDY: Romans 5: 2; Jeremiah 29: 11; I Thessalonians 5: 19-20; I John 3: 2, 3.

OCTOBER 5—Shepherd of Israel

READ: Psalm 80: 1-7, 14-18; Ezekiel 34: 1-31

REFLECT: What a blessing it is for believers in Christ to live during this time to witness the Shepherd of Israel gathering His flock, the Jews, back to the land that He promised them in His covenant with Abraham. Genesis 12 1-3; 15: 5-21. This same covenant He reaffirmed with Isaac, Jacob and then Moses when He brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. More recently, for almost two thousand years the Jews wandered through all the nations of the earth to which God had scattered them in “the” diaspora in 70 A.D. When God cast the Jews out of the Land at the hands of the Roman Army in 70 A.D., He was causing His wrath to come upon them for their pride, stubbornness and disobedience. But, just because of their sin, God would never break His covenant with them, however. God does not change, nor does He break His promises. He is a covenant-keeping God. When He promised through most of the Old Testament prophets that He would bring Israel back from the nations to which He had scattered them, He promised! In 1948, He began to do this, gathering the Jews from the four corners of the world to lead them back to Israel like a Shepherd to the pasture Land He had given them in His covenant promise to Abraham. Deuteronomy 28: 15, 46-47, 64-68; 30: 1-10.

For Christ-followers, what a confirmation and reassurance this is for us. When we repented of our sins and asked Jesus to be our Lord and Savior, God promised us eternal life and forgiveness of our sins. And, not only did He promise to forgive our sins, but He also promised that He would remember them no more. Hebrews 10: 17. This doesn’t mean that we won’t suffer the consequences of the sins we commit, but look at the promises He continues to give us. If we go astray, like a Shepherd, He will come and look for us! Matthew 18: 12-13.

If He has gone out to lead Israel back to the Promised Land because He promised to do that, even though they have rejected Him and have not accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah, how much more of a Shepherd will He be to those who belong to Him through the shed blood on His Only Begotten Son Jesus? Matthew 7: 11. So, keep your eyes on Israel, because He has promised them much more. He is physically gathering them back to the Land right now, but once they are there, he has promised to restore them spiritually as well. *“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.”* Ezekiel 36-37. Watch! Next, God will establish Jesus to be the Jews King of Kings and He will sit on the throne of the shepherd-king David in the city of Jerusalem; and we, the Bride of Christ, the Church, will rule and reign with Him, because the Shepherd of Israel has promised! Zechariah 14: 1-21; Revelation 5: 6-10.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus came to be a Shepherd to the lost, whether it be the remnant of His nation Israel, believers or those who are still lost and yet to come into His sheepfold. Help us to follow the Shepherd of Israel—our soon and coming King! In His name we pray. Amen. John 10: 16.

OCTOBER 6—Habitation of Justice

READ: Jeremiah 50: 6-7; 31: 23; Psalm 89: 14; 132: 5, 13

REFLECT: Psalm 89: 14—*“Justice and righteousness are the habitation of God’s throne.”*

The world is full of injustices and it often seems as if evil men are the ones who flourish. However, God is a god of justice and He cannot be in the presence of sin, so wherever He is working, sin and evil cannot be there, for long. The Hebrew word for “habitation” is “mekhon” which is the same word for “foundation”, and it means “abode”. So, because God is just and holy, wherever He abides must be a place of justice. Even the enemies of the Israelites understood this. Jeremiah 50: 6-7 says, *“My people have been lost sheep...They have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place. All who found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, ‘We have not offended, because they (Israelites) have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, the Lord, the hope of their fathers.’”* Because Israel’s enemies knew that Israel’s God was a God of justice, they knew that if Israel was sinning, their God would not go with them, or before them. Whenever the Jews sinned and the God of Israel had departed, their enemies then felt that God’s “lost” sheep of Israel were “fair game” and unprotected.

Second Chronicles 6: 1-42 is an example of the Israelites themselves understanding that where God was, there must be justice. They knew He would not abide with them if they were disobedient and wallowing in sin. This passage is King Solomon’s plea for the Lord to hear from Heaven, where He “dwelled”, and come to correct the injustices going on among them and to forgive the sins they were committing. Solomon had built a new temple for the Lord to dwell in, and He understood that God would not come and make the new temple His habitation as long as justice was not demanded from and of the people.

In John 14: 23, Jesus said, *“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”* Do you have an understanding of the depth of responsibility this puts upon Christ-followers to live in justice? Obeying the Lord in all of your ways includes being just and fair, living in truth. When the Holy Spirit comes to indwell a believer at the point of salvation, they are sealed forever by the Spirit and never will He leave or forsake them. They become a “habitation of justice”! If they sin and are unjust, they force the indwelling Holy Spirit to experience that injustice too! I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to grieve the Holy Spirit like that! Remember, whatever the injustices are that you are facing in this world, Satan is the prince of this world, but only God will be in control when this sin-laden world is gone and God inhabits eternity with every Christ-follower. Isaiah 57: 15. Whenever I see all the injustices that are going on around me, I try to focus on eternity. Then I find great comfort in knowing that in our eternal home, *“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* Revelation 21: 27.

PRAY: In prayer today, praise God for being the “Habitation of Justice” because God promises in His Word that He inhabits the praise of His people. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

OCTOBER 7—Tabernacle

READ: Leviticus 23: 33-44; Psalm 15: 1-5; 84: 1-4; Revelation 21: 3

REFLECT: Following their freedom from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years. During this time, God dwelled among them in a tabernacle or tent. Built according to strict specifications that God gave to Moses, the tabernacle could be taken up and moved so the Lord could go with them, and continue to dwell among them, as they wandered. After they entered the Promised Land, God would have the tabernacle replaced by a permanent temple built by King Solomon, once again according to God's specific design. In both the tabernacle and the temple, God dwelled over the mercy seat, on top of the Ark of the Covenant, in the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest could enter into God's presence in the Holy of Holies, and then, only once a year. When God established the Jewish feasts and festivals that were required to be proclaimed, the Feast of Tabernacles would be one of three, seven-day feasts that all males were required to go "up to Jerusalem" to observe each year. Signaling the ingathering of the fall harvest of grapes and olives, it was said by the 1st Century historian Flavius Josephus, that the Feast of Tabernacles was the most popular of the three required feasts, the other two being Passover and Pentecost. During this time, the Jews were required to gather four different types of branches with which they were to build small booths, tents or tabernacles to live in during the feast week. This was in remembrance of their years of wandering in the wilderness when God had "tabernacle(d)" with them as they lived in nomadic tents. It was a time of "ingathering" of people, just as the harvest was being "gathered" in. During this seven-day feast, two days were dedicated to special ceremonies, one having to do with "lamp-lighting" and the other with "water-drawing". It is thought that during these two days, Jesus proclaimed His divinity in two different ways, by claiming to be: (1) the Light of the World; and, (2) the Living Water. John 8: 12; 7: 37-38. We know from Scripture that He was in Jerusalem with His disciples during this feast. John 7: 1. Little did His disciples know, but God, Jesus incarnate, was literally "tabernacle(ing)" with them at that time during the Feast. How interesting when examining the three required festivals, that you can see three times that God "tabernacle(d)" with His people. Passover, the day when Jesus was crucified, ended the time of Jesus' First Coming—the first time since sin had entered the world when God had literally "tabernacle(d)" in the flesh with His people. Pentecost, the second required feast, is the day when God would send the Holy spirit to indwell believers, literally making their bodies a temple or tabernacle of the Living God. I Corinthians 3: 16; 6: 19. And finally, the Feast of Tabernacles, which is thought by most evangelical Christians and Messianic Jews to be the time of the Second Coming of Christ, when He will return to "tabernacle" with His people and establish His Millennial Kingdom. I don't know about you, but I most look forward to the time when all sin will be vanquished and Christ will be the King of Kings. Then God and the Lamb will be our tabernacle and we will dwell with the Lord forever!

PRAY: Meditate upon this passage from Revelation 21: 3-4: "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*" Thank God that He is our Tabernacle. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!!!

OCTOBER 8—The Sacrifice

READ: Ephesians 5: 2; Genesis 22: 1-18; John 10: 11-18

REFLECT: Ephesians 5: 2—“(A)nd walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” The definition of a “sacrifice” is the “killing of an animal or person, or giving up of a possession as an offering to a god or goddess”, or “an act of giving up something one values for the sake of something that is more important”. Most religious, sacrificial systems consisted of offerings given to a deity for the purpose of turning away his/her anger or wrath. It was thought that the very gift of “life”, or of something of value or worth, would appease or please the god, diverting any punishment. Obviously, the deity’s anger had arisen due to disobedience or sin on the part of the worshippers. The One True God established a system of sacrificial laws that His people were to use in their offerings to Him. Sacrifices were needed because God is holy and cannot even be in the presence of sin. So, in order for His people to be able to fellowship with Him, their sins needed to be covered. After Adam and Eve sinned, God Himself prepared the first sacrifice by killing an innocent animal to provide a skin covering for them in order to hide the nakedness and shame they felt from the guilt of their sin. Genesis 3: 1-24. Later, to test his obedience and faithfulness, God would require Abraham to sacrifice His only son, stopping him short of the sacrifice unto his son’s death by providing a ram for the offering. Genesis 22: 1-19. Abraham’s faithfulness and obedience would be a foreshadowing of God’s love in offering up His Only Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. John 3: 16; II Corinthians 5: 21.

Jesus is the One and Only, Perfect Sacrifice. The fact that He laid down His own life for His lost sheep—that He valued their salvation more than His own life—is the epitome of ultimate, sacrificial love. Never did He try to come to His own defense or to save Himself. He willingly suffered death on a cross to be the propitiation for our sins, even though he was perfect and without sin. He offered “one sacrifice for sins forever”, establishing that there would no longer, ever, be a need for another sacrifice. Hebrews 10: 12, 26. What sacrifice could be more pleasing to God? Repeatedly, Scripture says that God desires “mercy” rather than “sacrifices and offerings”. Psalms 40: 6-8; 51: 16-17; Matthew 9: 13; 12: 1-8. And, as Jesus said, “... go and learn what this means: ...”. It means that God is more pleased in seeing His people obey His moral laws by displaying love and mercy to others with humble and contrite hearts, than He is in seeing them attempt to perfectly carry out ceremonial, sacrificial laws to the letter. The latter is impossible with man. Matthew 19: 13, 26. “... but with God all things are possible.”

PRAY: God desires that we be “living sacrifices”, offering up our bodies and wills in service and obedience to Him. Romans 12: 1. As I Peter 2: 5 says, “(Y)ou also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” If you are making sacrifices for God’s Kingdom—giving of your finances, time and talents—what does your heart look like? Are you doing it in response to your love for God for His sacrifice of His Son for you, or are you doing it out of pride and self-righteousness. Compose a prayer as you thank God for the sacrifice of Jesus, His Son, and ask Him to examine your heart and help you to be a living sacrifice for Him. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: I Peter 2: 5, 23-24; Psalm 40: 6-8; 51: 16-17; Matthew 9: 13; 12: 7.

OCTOBER 9—Faithful Witness

READ: Revelation 1: 4-6; John 8: 13-18; 18: 37; Deuteronomy 17: 6; Romans 8: 15-16

REFLECT: John 18: 37—“*You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.*”

Acts 1: 8—“(Y)ou shall be witnesses to Me...”

Exodus 20: 16—“*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*”

In John 18: 37, Jesus testified before Pilate that He came to “*bear witness to the truth*”; but, just what is truth? The truth is that God loved the world so much that He didn’t want men to die in their sins; so, He became flesh, dwelled on earth among them, died on a cross, and then rose again, so that they might repent, accept Him as their Lord and Savior and receive eternal life.

Under Mosaic Law, two or three witnesses were required to testify as to evidence given in legal matters. Deuteronomy 17: 6; 19: 15. When Jesus claimed to be a witness to the truth of His divinity, His testimony was not believed because He was testifying as to Himself, without any corroborating witnesses. However, Jesus said that both God the Father and the Holy Spirit bore witness for Him. The Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes considered this to be blasphemy because His response insinuated that Jesus was saying that He was God. John 8: 13-18.

At Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit and God the Father both bore witness to His divinity, when the Spirit descended from Heaven as a dove and came to rest upon Him, as God spoke saying, “*This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” Matthew 3: 16-17. When Jesus was crucified, His spilled blood and death bore witness to His divinity. Immediately when He died, the veil in the Holy of Holies tore in two, darkness enshrouded the earth, an earthquake rocked the ground and many arose from their graves and came into the city. The centurion guarding Jesus exclaimed, “*Truly this was the Son of God!*” Matthew 27: 54. During the 3½ years of His ministry, Jesus’ disciples witnessed Him performing miracles, and later could testify about Him. Acts 10: 38-39. But, the greatest evidence left behind by Jesus to bear Him witness, is the gift of the Holy Spirit who indwells believers. His Spirit in us bears witness with our spirits that cry out, “*Abba, Father!*” Romans 8: 15-16; Galatians 4: 6. The very life we live in Christ testifies as to the power of God through His Holy Spirit, as evidenced by our belief in Who He is, by our display of His love to others, and by our obedience to His commands. I John 1-2. Because Jesus was a Faithful Witness to the truth, we too can be witnesses for Him, if His Holy Spirit lives within us! Are you “faithful” in your witness for Him? Record your thoughts.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You are faithful in all of Your ways and that Jesus stands forever before Your throne as a faithful witness to intercede for me against the attacks of Satan. Thank You that I will stand acquitted one day before Your court in Heaven because I am cleansed of any guilt due to the Faithful Witness of Jesus’ blood. In His name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Matthew 27: 51-54; I John 5: 6-13; Acts 1: 8; 10: 38-39.

OCTOBER 10—Breath of Life

READ: Genesis 2: 7; 7: 17-24; John 6: 63; John 17: 24-28

REFLECT: Genesis 2: 7—*“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.”*

Job 33: 4—*“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”*

John 6: 63—*“It is the Spirit that gives life; flesh profits nothing.”*

God breathes the breath of life into us and we become living, human beings. As Acts 17: 27 tells us, *“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life, and breath and everything else.”* So, it is by the Breath of God, the Breath of Life, that our physical bodies are given life.

Furthermore, it is God who breathes the breath of life into us to give us our spiritual lives, too. Acts 17: 27 says that God sets the times for every man and *“... the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.”* When we find God as a result of Him pursuing us, He breathes His life-giving Spirit into us, forgiving us of our sin—giving us victory over death. I John 4: 9-10.

If you are a Christ-follower and God has given you both physical and spiritual life, even if your physical life ends, your spiritual life will continue with Him forever. As II Corinthians 5: 9 says, *“To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”* Has God breathed both a physical and spiritual life into you? If you die, will your spirit be with the Lord forever? Has he given you the Breath of Life? John 11:25-26.

PRAY: In prayer today, mediate upon the words to this praise song by Randy Stonehill, called *“The Breath of God”* and sing this song as a prayer, thanking God for giving you the Breath of Life.

“O breath of God, come in and dwell. Please make my aching heart your home and use me well. For You created me and named me as Your own, to know the wonder of Your love and make it known.

O breath of God, teach me Your ways, that I might serve You in these precious, fleeting days. Now I am sure of this, if I've learned nothing else, until I live for You, I do not live myself. Father, Father, lift me on Your wings. Show me why the angels sing, why the angels sing. O breath of God, I'm tired and cold, and all my dreams I've chased have left me feeling old. But, You've been waiting here, now I understand. Please let me fall into Your loving, nail-scarred hands.” In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Job 32: 8; 33: 4; II Corinthians 5: 1-8; John 11: 25-26.

OCTOBER 11—Our Defender

READ: Psalm 35: 23-24; Isaiah 19: 19-20

REFLECT: Psalm 35: 23-24—“*O Lord, You have seen this; be not silent. Do not be far from me, O Lord. Awake, and rise to my defense. Contend for me, my God and Lord. Vindicate me in Your righteousness, O Lord my God; and do not let them gloat over me.*”

Isaiah 19: 20(b)—“*When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, He will send them a savior and defender, and He will rescue them.*”

While it often seems that evil is winning and that the wicked go unpunished, we must never lose sight of the fact that God has told us repeatedly that vengeance is His! Deuteronomy 32: 35. He has also reminded us that the battle is His and that He has provided us with everything we need to use to protect ourselves. He has already won the victory over sin and death. All that is required of us is to don the armor of God and “*stand*” firm in the face of evil. He will defend us by the power of His word! Ephesians 6: 10-22.

Over twenty-eight of the one-hundred and fifty Psalms can be described as being “precatory” or “imprecatory” in nature, where the Psalmist is crying out to God to defend him from the wickedness of his enemies and to bring down His wrath upon them. Our human nature almost always demands immediate justice for the wrongs done to us. Or, more applicative to “defense”, we, ourselves, want to immediately jump in and give a reason or justification for what we are being “falsely” accused of.

Revelation 12: 10 speaks of Satan standing before the throne of God, accusing “*the brethren*”, or believers in Christ, day and night. If the righteousness of Christ had not been imputed to us, he (Satan) would be justified in doing so. Because, unlike the preceding paragraph’s statement about pleading for defense from things we are “falsely” accused of, without Christ, we are absolutely guilty of the sin that Satan desires that we be indicted for. Romans 3: 23; 6: 23. However, because Christ did not come to His own defense, which He had every right to do; but, instead went to the Cross for us, “without one plea”, we, as Christ-followers, can stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ with Him as Our Defender—washed clean and clothed in the pure robes of His righteousness. Mark 15: 1-5. Because He is Our Defender, we can plead “*the blood of the Lamb*” as our testimony; and, dying to self while we surrender our own will and our own right to a defense, we will receive the verdict, “Not guilty!”, with Jesus as Our Defender. Revelation 12: 10-11.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus is My Defender and that when I am persecuted for His name’s sake, I do not have to try and defend myself because He has already defended me against the accusations of Satan and I stand acquitted before You. Thank You that He hung on the Cross so that He could stand before Your throne as my defense counsel. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Proverbs 23: 10-11; Revelation 12: 10-11; Ephesians 6: 10-22.

OCTOBER 12—Consolation of Israel

READ: Luke 2: 25; Isaiah 12: 1-6; 49: 13

REFLECT: Consolation can also be translated as Comforter. When Luke refers to God as the “*consolation of Israel*”, he is referring to Jesus as their Messiah. A quote from R.C. Sproul says, “Luke’s use of the phrase ‘consolation of Israel’ is striking and it is clearly to be taken in a messianic sense. Throughout their history, the people of Israel had suffered greatly, both for their own sin and because of the oppression of others. Their land was frequently overrun by foreign powers who knew the strategic significance of Palestine, which connected Africa, Europe and Asia. They suffered under slavery in Egypt and endured the troubles of exile. In short, they were a people in desperate need of consolation and comfort—the kind of permanent comfort that could come only when the son of David would arrive to guard them and provide for the forgiveness of their sin.”

God loves us so much and, as a result, He also gives believers His awesome consolation and comfort through the presence of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus promised His disciples that, upon His departure, God would not leave them alone but would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, One who would be just like Him and would be with them forever, He was consoling them and guaranteeing, not only them, but every Christ-follower to come that they could rest in the comfort that they would one day be with Jesus forever. Ephesians 1: 13-14; John 14: 1-6. We live in a world that is a product of the “fall”. You cannot watch the news without hearing about the latest rape, robbery or kidnapping. Natural disasters are not uncommon, and our country is plagued with terrorist threat after terrorist threat. On a more personal level, we all struggle with relational issues involving co-workers, friends and/or family members. There are things about our lives that we would give anything to change. We wish we were not in debt or too dependent upon our paychecks. We despise the fact that we have been inflicted with a chronic illness. Add to this list, the fact that Satan tempts us on a daily basis with opportunities to gossip, to lie, cheat, deceive and fulfill our selfish desires. With all of this negativity and discouragement around us, we need consolation! Praise God that He is greater than the one who is in this world and that He (Jesus), by the presence of the Holy Spirit, lives within every Christ-follower. I John 4: 4. Praise God that His peace passes all understanding. Even though we face trials and temptations on a daily basis, when we seek God, we find in Him the peace and consolation that we need. No matter what you are going through, allow God to be your Consolation. Give Him your heaviest burden, your greatest worry, and your most pressing stronghold. Tell Him how you feel. Confide in Him and allow yourself to be filled with His comfort—the Holy Spirit. As you do this, God will not only console you, but He will be able to use you to offer comfort to others in the same way that He has offered comfort to you. I Corinthians 1: 3-4.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You are not only the Consolation of Israel but, through Christ, I am not only offered the consolation and comfort that I need to help me with the trials that I face in this world, but that the Comfort of the Holy Spirit seals me, assuring that I rest in my eternal salvation because of Jesus. There is no greater Consolation than that! In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: John 14: 16, 27; I John 4: 4; I Corinthians 1: 3-4.

OCTOBER 13—Glory of Your People Israel

READ: Luke 2: 30-32; Ezekiel 8: 1-6; 10: 1-5, 18-19; 11: 5-24; 43: 1-9; II Corinthians 3 7-18

REFLECT: From the time that the glory of the Lord descended upon Mt. Sinai as God spoke to Moses and gave him the tablets of the Law, until His glory left the temple during Israel's Babylonian captivity, the Jews took God's presence for granted. Exodus 24: 12-18. During their wanderings in the wilderness, God dwelled in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, and appeared to the Israelites as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. If the cloud or pillar moved, the Israelites would "pull up camp", and follow Him. At one point, Moses even told the Lord that they didn't want to go forward, unless the Lord's presence went with them. Exodus 33: 12-22. After they entered the Promised Land, and King Solomon built the first temple years later, God's presence and glory continued to rest upon the Ark of the Covenant on the Mercy Seat, between the wings of the cherubim, in the Holy of Holies. His glory was confined to the Holy of Holies because His holiness prevented Him from being in the presence of sin. Even though the Jews did not physically see the Glory of the Lord, His glory was displayed in His character as He worked in their lives. As the study notes to Exodus 34: 6-7 in the NIV *"Life Application Study Bible"* say, *"God's glory is revealed in His mercy, grace, compassion, faithfulness, forgiveness and justice."* However, the Jews would continue in their idolatry and sin, forcing God to send them into captivity at the hands of their enemies. While they were in captivity in Babylon, the presence of God, His Glory, would leave the temple. Ezekiel 8: 1-9; 10: 1-5, 18-19; 11: 5-24. Although, faithfully and continually, Israel's prophets would prophecy that God's glory would return, should the Israelites repent and be obedient to the Lord, they still continued in their sin.

Even though the prophecies would tell about God sending the Messiah to cleanse them, restore them and reveal His glory to them again, explaining clearly what would be the signs of His coming, when Christ first appeared, most did not recognize Him when it occurred. The Glory of His People Israel was living in their midst and they did not know Him. Jesus was the fullness of God in human form—the Glory of God made incarnate. However there were exceptions to the Jews' unbelief. When the old priest Simeon saw the baby Jesus in the temple at His circumcision, he knew that the Glory of God had returned to Israel, while at the same time he also prophesied that God would make His Glory appear to the Gentiles. *"For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for **glory to Your people Israel.**"* Luke 2: 30-32. Only a remnant of the Jews recognized God's glory in Christ. As a result, salvation and glory would come to the Gentiles. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, we who belong to Jesus reflect the glory of God more and more, as He continues to sanctify us. II Corinthians 3: 7-18. However, that doesn't mean that God won't reveal His promised Glory to (His) People Israel. One day soon, He will return, and Israel will look upon Him whom they pierced and repent. Then He will reveal His glory to them! The remnant that God has saved from the Jews will live in the Glory of the presence of the Lord in the Millennial Kingdom in the New Jerusalem. His promises are true and He is a covenant-keeping God. To Him alone belongs the glory! Romans 11: 25-36.

PRAYER AND FURTHER STUDY: Meditate upon the words in Jesus' prayer to His Father when He prayed for His own to be given the same glory that the Father had given Him and compose a prayer thanking Him. In Jesus' name, Amen! John 17: 1-5, 20-26.

OCTOBER 14—Chief Shepherd

READ: I Peter 5: 2-7; Zechariah 13: 7-9; John 10: 1-16; 21: 15-17

REFLECT: I Peter 5: 2-4—

*“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—
Not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be;
not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you,
but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears,
you will receive the crown of glory that never fades away.”*

The Chief Shepherd referred to in the above passage is Jesus Christ, and “*chief*” means “*lead, main, most important*”, or “*of the highest rank or authority*”. So, Peter was telling the leaders of the church that they were to follow the example of Christ, who is the Head Shepherd, or Head Leader over His Body, which is the Church, His Bride. Colossians 1: 17-18; Ephesians 5: 22-33. In the same way, Paul, in Acts 20: 28, was telling the leaders of the church in Ephesus to watch over the members of the church as a shepherd would watch over his sheep.

During the period of time in which Peter and Paul were speaking to “*elders*” and “*overseers*” in the church, the Greek word for “*elder*” or “*overseer*” meant “*older*”. So, even if you aren’t in the literal position of a pastor, elder, bishop or overseer in your church, but God has still called you to a position of leadership over someone who is “*newer*” or “*younger*” in the faith than you are, you will be held to a higher standard of accountability than someone who is a new believer. Someone who is younger in age than someone else is, may still be a more mature Christian, and so should “*shepherd*” the older, but newer, less mature Christians. To someone whom much has been given, i.e. knowledge of God’s Word, much more will be expected. Luke 12: 48.

The three main responsibilities of a shepherd are: (1) to lead, (2) to take care of and/or protect, and (3) to feed the sheep. In John 21: 15-17, Jesus told His disciples essentially, that if they loved Him they would “*take care of*” and “*feed*” His sheep. If you examine the 23rd Psalm, you will see that the Lord is a shepherd, who “*makes me lie down in green pastures*”, and “*leads me beside still waters*”, while protecting and feeding me in “*the presence of my enemies*”, even though I may be “*walking through the valley of the shadow of death*”. The “*green pastures*” are a picture of God’s Word on which the sheep should feed, and the “*leading by still waters*” could be a reference to the guiding, or leading of the Holy Spirit. Even though the sheep may be walking through a valley full of hungry wolves and dangerous pitfalls, with crags, and steep cliffs on each side, and death awaiting them around every turn, if they follow their Chief Shepherd, He has everything needed for their protection and care. Jesus, Savior, like a Shepherd lead us. Great we need Thy tender care!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that even if I was the only sheep out of a hundred that had gone astray, Jesus would have come after me to lead, guide and protect me, providing for my every need. I love You Jesus. Help me to feed Your sheep. In Your name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Hebrews 13: 20; Acts 20: 28; Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:10-11; Matthew 26: 31.

OCTOBER 15—Star Out of Jacob

READ: Numbers 24: 17; II Corinthians 4: 6; Daniel 12: 1-4

REFLECT: Numbers 24: 17 speaks of a prophecy that foreshadows Jesus as the Messiah. Balaam, a Mesopotamian prophet, likens the Messiah to a star, which speaks of His glory. Many things on earth may be considered glorious: sunsets, a work of art, and the stars that fill the sky at night. What is more glorious than these, however, is the *One who created, and is in control of*, such works of beauty. However, God is not glorious because He shines brightly like a star. There is so much more to His glory than that! It is so difficult to even come up with words that accurately describe His glory. But, the fact that our human minds cannot fully grasp His glory and we have to resort to comparing it to things that we can see or understand emphasizes the limitations of words to describe our Savior and His glory.

Meditate upon the lyrics to the song by Third Day called “*Show Me Your Glory*”:

*“I caught a glimpse of Your splendor, in the corner of my eye
The most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen, and it was like a flash of lightning
Reflected off the sky, and I know I’ll never be the same.
Show me Your glory, send down Your presence, I want to see Your face.
Show me Your glory, majesty shines about You, I can’t go on without You, Lord.
When I climb down the mountain, and get back to life
I won’t settle for ordinary things, I’m gonna follow You forever
And for all of my days, I won’t rest ‘til I see You again.
Show me Your glory, show me Your glory
I can’t live without You!”*

Wow! As this song conveys, even a glimpse of God’s splendor and glory can be considered to be the most beautiful thing that we ever see! *He is more beautiful than all the stars* in the heavens. Even the smallest insight into our Creator’s glory is more wonderful than the most beautifully written poem or the most elaborate constellation of stars, let alone one star. And, as stated in the song, when we see His glory, we’ll “*never be the same*”. Like Moses, we should desire for God to reveal more of His glory to us. Exodus 33: 18; Isaiah 6: 1-4.

PRAY: Compose a simple prayer asking God to reveal Himself to you in a new way so that you see more of His glory—so much so that you realize that He is like The Star Out of Jacob as He shines in His splendor and glory in your own life. Thank You Jesus that You and Your power shine like the stars in the heavens. In Your brilliant and glorious name we pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Exodus 33: 12-23; Isaiah 9: 1-7.

OCTOBER 16—True Light

READ: John 1: 9; 3: 19-21; 8: 12; 12: 35-36; Revelation 21: 22-27; Isaiah 49: 6

REFLECT: Jesus said, *“I AM the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”* John 8: 12. And Scripture further says that, *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”* John 1: 4-5. From the beginning, Jesus was the True Light, and in the New Jerusalem, He and God will be the only light—there being no need for the sun to shine by day, or the moon or stars to shine by night, because there will no longer be any night. Revelation 21: 23-24, 22: 5. Proverbs 16: 15(a) says, *“In the light of a king’s face is life,…”* The face of God and the Lamb will give us all the light we need for all of eternity. Jesus is the true embodiment of light because He is light. In Him there is no darkness. As children of God and Christ-followers, we are not light, but a *“reflection”* of the light of Christ. The more we become like Him, the more we reflect His light. The more we reflect the light of Christ, the more He is glorified because people look upon us and no longer see us as individuals, but they see something different, and that difference is Jesus. Matthew 5: 14-16.

Shortly before Jesus was arrested, He told His disciples, *“A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, **believe** in the light, that you may become sons of light.”* John 12: 35-36. The disciples needed to pay particular heed to these words. Once Jesus left this earth, the world would once again be plunged into the darkness of sin. Not until God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers after Jesus’ ascension into heaven would there be the True Light to light their way. As Jesus had told them, anyone walking in darkness does not know where he is going. That is why He told them to stay in Jerusalem until the promised Holy Spirit was sent. The reason the disciples needed to be “about the business” of getting to know Jesus was because the Holy Spirit would only be sent to those who *“believe in the light”*. They would be the only ones receiving the guidance of the Holy Spirit to light their way. To be *“sons of light”*, they needed to *“know”* the giver of the True Light, and *“believe”* in Him.

In much the same way, we, as *“children of the light”* need to be “about the business” of shining the light of Christ, the True Light, into the darkness around us. Ephesians 5: 8-10. Soon Jesus will come to rapture the Church and take those who belong to Him to be with Him in Heaven. Then, until He calls the witnesses of the gospel from among the remnant He has saved for Himself, the Antichrist will take center stage and the world will once again be plunged into darkness, not knowing where it is going. So, for the short time we are here with the True Light, we need to be *“letting our light so shine before men, that they might see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.”* Matthew 5: 16. The first sign of a *“true”* believer is that they *“believe”*. Then as they are sanctified, the love of God and their obedience to His commandments are lights in their lives that reveal who they belong to—the True Light—Jesus!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You for sending Jesus, the True Light into my life. Help me to let His light shine through me so that He is seen and the lost drawn to Him. In His name. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Genesis 1: 3-5, 14-19; II Thessalonians 2: 3-8; I John 1: 5-7; 2: 8-11.

OCTOBER 17—Life

READ: John 11: 25; 10: 10; 14: 6; Daniel 12: 2

REFLECT: John 11: 25—“*Jesus said to her, ‘I AM the resurrection and the life. He who **believes** in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and **believes** in Me shall never die. Do you **believe** this?’*”

In this passage, Jesus raises His friend Lazarus from the dead, after he had been in the tomb for four days. As Jesus approaches the village of Bethany where Lazarus had lived with his sisters Mary and Martha, Jesus meets Martha on the road. She immediately begins to rebuke Jesus for His delay in getting to Lazarus, saying that her brother would not have died had Jesus come earlier. However, Jesus tells her that whoever “**believes**” in Him will live, even though they have died an earthly death... finally saying to her, “*Do you **believe** this?*” As I John 5: 11-13 says, “*These things I have written to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to **believe** in the name of the Son of God.*” “Continu(ing) to **believe**” means that your faith is strong enough that you don’t later doubt that you have eternal life.

First John 2: 3-11, 22-23 and I John 3: 13-15 explain that certain things produce evidence in someone’s life that they belong to Jesus and therefore have eternal life—those things being: (1) **believing** that Jesus is the Son of God and believing in what He did; (2) spreading the love of God abroad to others in one’s life, particularly to brothers and sisters in Christ; and, (3) obeying Christ’s commands. But, the foundation of all of these proofs or evidences is **believing** in who Jesus said He was, **believing** in what He said that He did and appropriating this truth into your own life by allowing the manifestation of God’s love in your life and letting that love flow into the life and faith of others. James 2: 14-26; Philippians 2: 17. Just **believing** is not enough. Even Satan and his demons **believe** Jesus was who He said He was. James 2: 17-22. You must make this truth your own—that He was the Son of God and that He died and rose again to give those who would “**believe** in Him by faith”, eternal life. On October 17, 2000, my husband Bob went home to be with the Lord. On that day, God’s name on my devotional calendar was “Life” and the accompanying commentary was based on John 11: 25. Two months before that, in an answer to prayer, Bob had “*confessed with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and **believed** in his heart that God raised Him from the dead*”. So, even though Bob had died an earthly death, yet he lives! I do **believe** this!

PRAY: Today in prayer, meditate upon the John 11: 25 passage and allow the Holy Spirit to examine your heart to make certain that you are a Christ-follower and that you truly **believe** that Jesus died and rose again to give you eternal life—that you have confessed this belief with your mouth and have **believed** in your heart that He is your Savior and your Lord. Do your actions and/or “works” demonstrate that you **believe** in Jesus unto eternal life? Pray In Jesus’ name. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 139: 23-24; II Corinthians 5: 1-21; I John 1: 1-4; 5: 11-13.

OCTOBER 18—He Whose Dwelling Place is Lovely

READ: Psalm 84: 1-12; John 14: 1-6, 27

REFLECT: Psalm 84: 1-2, 10 says, *“How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God...For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere . I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”*

Psalm 84 beautifully describes what our heart’s desire and attitude should be as Christ-followers towards our eternal home in Heaven. Shouldn’t our soul long to be with God and shouldn’t our heart be satisfied in His presence alone? To think that one day with Him is better than a thousand elsewhere. Wow!

PRAY: Today, meditate upon Psalm 84 and the lyrics to Chris Tomlin’s song *“Better is One Day in Your House”*. Then, allow the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and your thoughts about where your heart desires for you to be for all of eternity. Honestly record what the Holy Spirit is showing you. Pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Chris Tomlin’s song *“Better Is One Day”*:

*“How lovely is Your dwelling place, Oh, Lord Almighty.
For my soul longs and even faints for You.
Oh, here my heart is satisfied (is satisfied) within Your presence
I see beneath the shadow of Your wings.
Better is one day in Your courts, better is one day in Your house
Better is one day in Your courts than thousands elsewhere.
Better is one day in Your courts, better is one day in Your house,
Better is one day in Your courts, than thousands elsewhere (than thousands elsewhere).
One thing I ask, and I would seek, to see Your beauty.
To find You in, the place Your glory dwells.
(One thing I ask), One thing I ask, and I would seek,
To see Your beauty. To find You in the place Your glory dwells!”*

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 27: 4-6; 42: 1-4; Hebrews 11: 13-16; 13: 12-14;
II Corinthians 5: 1-8.

OCTOBER 19—Manna

READ: John 6: 25-59

REFLECT: Often it is said that we are what we eat. One definition of “*manna*” is “*divine*” or “*spiritual food*”. “*Food*” is defined by dictionary.com as “*any nourishing substance that is eaten, drunk, or otherwise taken into the body to sustain life, provide energy, promote growth, etc.*” Isn’t that what our Heavenly Father is to us? We do not physically eat or drink Him like we do a turkey sandwich or coffee, but shouldn’t we feast on His Word? Shouldn’t we rely on Him to nourish us and sustain us emotionally, physically and spiritually?

Jesus spoke these words in John 6: 47-51:

“I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I AM the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I AM the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

Jesus is the Manna that not only nourishes us today, but will also nourish us for eternity!

What do you do when you want to savor your favorite dessert? Do you gobble it up in seconds, barely taking time to allow the flavors to settle on your taste buds? No, most likely you relish each and every bite. You allow your senses to fully absorb the flavor and even the scent of the dessert. You want each bite to linger, and you long for more when you finish. That is what God wants us to do with His Word, which is our manna, our food. When you spend time in God’s Word, make sure that you savor every moment. Do not read a passage of Scripture so that you can check it off of your “to-do” list. Rather, take time to meditate, or “chew upon” the Word of God. When cows eat, they go through a process called “ruminating”. Cows do not chew their food one time, swallow it, and then eat the next bite. They “chew their cud”, not just once, but several times, regurgitating after they swallow it to chew it again, over and over. This process allows cows to fully absorb the nutrients that the food provides for their bodies. This may sound like a disgusting analogy, but it is a fitting description of how we are to handle the Word of God. We are not to just inhale our food without thinking. Like cows, we are to ruminate (which is also a synonym for “ponder”) in order to fully absorb what God wants the Holy Spirit to teach us about Him, ourselves and this journey we call life. Jesus is the Manna that not only nourishes us today, but will also nourish us for eternity! Feast on the Word of God. Savor each bite. Allow it to nourish you to the core, providing every inch of your body with the strength, peace, wisdom and endurance that you need. When you ask God to provide you with your “*daily bread*”, may your petition be not just physical food but heavenly Manna.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus provides the heavenly, spiritual food that I need to nourish me spiritually. Give me a hunger and thirst for Your Living Word—Jesus the Manna—that cannot be quenched. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Exodus 16: 1-35; I Corinthians 10: 1-7.

OCTOBER 20—He Who Gives Us An Undivided Heart and Removes Our Heart of Stone

READ: Ezekiel 11: 17-21; 36: 24-28; II Corinthians 3: 1-3

REFLECT: When someone's heart is hardened against the things of God, it can be said that he or she has a heart of stone. That person does not desire to please or honor God with their life. They usually seek only to fulfill their own selfish desires. Such a person leads a life of sin without regard to what God desires for them.

Promises from Old Testament passages such as the Ezekiel passages listed above, and the ones in the **FURTHER STUDY** section below, describe a work of God that spiritually changes a heart of stone into a heart of flesh and causes that person to "know", "love" and "obey" God. John Piper, in his book *"Desiring God"* explains how, without this spiritual heart transplant, people will not know, love and obey God. People whose hearts are hardened will not repent and believe unless God does His work to miraculously change their hard and rebellious hearts.

Changing someone's heart of stone is not something that we can do. We cannot tell a friend that they must reprioritize their life and be more receptive to what God wants for them. We cannot change people, even ourselves. Only God, by the power and work of the Holy Spirit, can do that.

God wants His people to have undivided hearts towards Him. He is a jealous God who commands us to not put other gods before Him. Exodus 20: 3. He commands us to *"...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart."* Deuteronomy 6: 5-6. Jesus also said that the greatest commandment was: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."* Matthew 22: 37. God does not want just 82% of your heart, or even 99%. Rather, He wants all of you as a Christ-follower! He does not want you to even give 1% of your heart to another idol or god. He wants 100% of you for Himself! You may try to seek temporal gain or satisfaction from another god or idol, but only God can fully satisfy. Psalm 37: 4.

If your heart is not hardened towards God and you are a Christ-follower, it should be your heart's desire to serve Him and live for Him out of love, not out of obligation or duty. God does not want us to be in a legalistic relationship with Him that is based on rules that are written in stone on a stony heart. He desires to write His law upon our hearts—hearts that He has softened through the loving work of the Holy Spirit. This miraculous work of the Holy Spirit should then prompt us to live lives of obedience to God because He first loved us. I John 4: 19.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You loved me so much that You sent Jesus to capture my heart by His saving work on the Cross and then You sent the Holy Spirit to use Your Word to change my heart of stone into a heart of flesh, a heart that believes unto salvation. Help me to love You with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Jeremiah 24: 1-7; 31: 31-34; 32: 37-41; Deuteronomy 30: 1-10.

OCTOBER 21—Light of the City

READ: Revelation 21: 2, 9-10, 22-27; 22: 1-5; Exodus 34: 29-35; I Timothy 6: 12-16

REFLECT: Revelation 21: 2—*“Then I, John, saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

Revelation 21: 9(b)-10—*“Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.”*

Revelation 22: 5—*“There shall be no light there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light.”*

The Light of the City is the glory of God that will be in the New Jerusalem, for God and the Lamb will be its light. However, examining the passages above, we see that the “city” or “New Jerusalem” was equated with the Bride of Christ, the Church, or the redeemed saints. So, part of the “light of the city” will be the glory of God reflected in the lives of the saints inhabiting the city. In Matthew 5: 14-16 Jesus told His disciples that they were the “light of the world”, “a city on a hill”, whose light should shine before men so God the Father could be glorified. What gives us that light? It is the “knowledge of the glory of God” that transports us out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light—God’s Kingdom. That knowledge of the glory of God is the Holy Spirit, or Jesus in our hearts—God’s Word dwelling within us—revealing the power of salvation that is from Him. II Corinthians 4: 1-7; Colossians 1: 12-14; Psalm 119: 11, 105.

When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the tablets of the Law, which were the “ministry of death”, or condemnation, his face was shining so much with the Lord’s glory that his face had to be veiled to protect the Israelites. Exodus 34: 29-35. This glory was an “unapproachable light”. I Timothy 6: 12-16. If that glory was so “unapproachable”, how much more glorious would the glory being reflected from the Spirit, in the “ministry of righteousness” be? II Corinthians 3: 7-18. So, those who are the Bride of Christ, the “soon to be” Lamb’s wife, have the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” hidden within their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. Imagine if we would allow that light to shine now, coming together and being one in the Spirit, so as to “increase the wattage”, so to speak. Think how bright the “city on a hill” could be on this earth! Although not as bright as Jesus, the Light of the City, it would certainly be a reflection of the brightness that is to come in the New Jerusalem—the True, Light of the City!

PRAY: Father God, I look forward so much to see Your glory and that of Jesus as the Light of the City in Heaven. I thank You that Jesus has shed His light abroad in my heart in the “knowledge of the glory of (You)”. Lord, show me, show me Your glory! In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Isaiah 6: 1-4; Matthew 5: 14-16; II Corinthians 3: 7-18; 4: 6; Psalm 119: 105; I Timothy 6: 12-16; Colossians 1: 12-13.

OCTOBER 22—Faithful and True

READ: Revelation 19: 11-16; Deuteronomy 7: 1-11; Psalm 117: 1-2; 33: 4-5; Romans 3: 1-4

REFLECT: Deuteronomy 7: 9—*“Therefore know that the Lord your God, the faithful God who keeps covenants and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”* One of the most incredible examples of how God is Faithful and True comes from this Deuteronomy passage. Even though the verse says that God will be faithful, keeping His covenants and displaying mercy to *“those who love Him and keep His commandments”*, His people have failed to love Him and keep His commandments, yet He remains Faithful and True. In Hosea, the relationship that Hosea had with his unfaithful wife Gomer, was a “type” of the relationship that God had with the nation Israel. He considered Israel to be His wife, and had entered into a holy, covenant relationship with her, but she continually played the role of harlot and was constantly chasing after idolatrous love. However, God remained Faithful and True, always taking her back and forgiving her, no matter what her infidelities were.

In the same way, Christ-followers can count on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ as their Bridegroom. When we accept the free gift of salvation offered through His shed blood, and repent of our sins, we enter into a covenant relationship with Him, He promises us eternal life, and we promise to believe in Him and the truth of His Word, loving and obeying Him in everything. But, even though He seals us with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing our redemption forever, we continue to fall into sin, breaking our part of the covenant. However, Jesus is Faithful and True, and whatever He has promised, He will do—no matter what we have done. In John 14: 2-3 Jesus said, *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so (or true), I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* If He said He will come back for His own, He means it and He will return for believers. I don’t know about you, but in this day and age, I find His promises so comforting. In Matthew 24: 3(b), 12, when Jesus was asked by His disciples, *“And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age”*, one of His replies was *“...the love of many will grow cold.”* And in II Timothy 3: 1-3, Paul reminds us, *“But know this, in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good”*, and the list goes on. It certainly doesn’t sound like truth and faithfulness will abound. But, My God is Faithful and True, and He will never leave me nor forsake me. No matter how I fail or disappoint Him, He will be there for me, to take me back, forgive me and take me to be with Him that I might be with Him forever! Great is (His) faithfulness, O God, My Father!

PRAY: Meditate upon these passages today from Lamentations 3: 22-23 and Psalm 117 and then compose a prayer thanking God that Jesus is Faithful and True to Christ-followers, His Bride. *“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations). “Praise the Lord, all you nations! Praise Him, all you people! For His merciful kindness is great toward us and His truth endures forever. Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 117).* In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Matthew 24: 3, 12; II Timothy 3: 1-3; Hosea 2: 19-20; Psalm 33: 4.

OCTOBER 23—Jehovah-Elohay (Lord My God)

READ: Zechariah 14: 1-5; John 20: 17

REFLECT: “*Jehovah-Elohay*” is Hebrew for the “*Lord My God*”. This name is unique from all the other names for God in that it is probably the most personal name, specifically because of the pronoun “my”. Who is “*My God*”? He is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is coming back with all the saints to rule and reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem for a thousand years. Ezekiel 43: 7; Revelation 19: 11-21; 21; 1-6.

One of the most frequently quoted passages for Jehovah-Elohay is Zechariah 14: 5, which speaks of the time when Jesus comes back with His “*saints*” to rule and reign and establish His Millennial Kingdom. This time is often referred to as the Second Coming of Christ. The interesting thing about the use of the Lord My God in this Old Testament passage that refers to “*saints*” is that it looks to a prophetic future time of Christ-followers, or the Bride, Christ’s Body, the Church, also ruling and reigning with Christ. These “*saints*” are a reference to “all” believers in Christ—those who had already gone to be with the Lord before the rapture and those who were gathered to Him during the rapture. While at this point in time they have all been joined together in one “Body” because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, at a prior time they stood as individuals—each one alone in the darkness of their sin and faced with a choice. Would they choose life or death? Deuteronomy 30: 11-20. That decision was one that they each had to make by themselves. No one could make it for them. You may have heard people say, “God does not have grandchildren!” That’s because no one will ever receive eternal life on someone else’s coattails. To be “*born again*”, there had to be a time when you didn’t just refer to God as the “Lord *Our* God”, but you had to have said, “Lord, You are *My* God!”

The more we grow in our knowledge of the Lord and who He is, the more personal our relationship with Him becomes. In John 20: 17, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalen after His resurrection and for the first time, refers to the disciples as “*brothers*”. Before that time, He called them “*friends*” or “*servants*”. Through His atoning sacrifice, he was now able to offer them, not only the gift of eternal life, but the opportunity to become a member of the family of God. Because of His obedience unto death at Calvary, Jesus’ Father could now become “My” Father, and His God could now be “My” God. John 20: 17. I could now know within “my” heart, that if He had had to die that day just for me, He would have done so. If I had been just one of the sheep of His flock who had wandered off, He would have left all the others to come and find me. Oh, the joy that fills my soul when I say, “Yes Lord, You are *My* Savior and *My* God!” Although not “all” people will ever allow their eyes to be opened so Jesus can be revealed to them by power of the Holy Spirit and be able to say, “Forgive me of “*my*” sin and be *My* Savior and *My* God...one day *every* person will know that they should have done so. One day soon, *every* knee will bow and *every* tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God *My* Father! Philippians 2: 5-11.

PRAY: Thank You Father God that Jesus is My Lord and My God! “*Oh God, You are My God, and I will forever praise You!*” In Jesus’ name. Amen. (Michael W. Smith—“*Step by Step*”)

FURTHER STUDY: Joshua 14: 8-9; Psalm 7: 1, 3; 18: 28; 30: 2, 12.

OCTOBER 24—Hidden Manna

READ: Revelation 2: 17; Exodus 16: 1-35; John 6: 25-35, 47--58; I Corinthians 2: 6-16

REFLECT: I Corinthians 2: 7-8—*“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the **hidden wisdom** which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”*

Revelation 2: 17—*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the **hidden manna** to eat.”* Jesus is the Bread of Life, the Hidden Manna, the spiritual food that remains “*hidden*” to those who don’t have spiritual eyes to see who He is, or ears to hear His Word and believe in Him for their salvation. Right after Jesus’ disciples had witnessed Him miraculously feed the 5,000 with physical bread and walking on the water, they still failed to understand Him as He spoke to them about being “*the true bread from heaven*”. Even though they had been with Him and heard His words and teaching, His divinity still remained “*hidden*” from their understanding. Jesus said, “*He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that **you have seen Me and yet you do not believe.***” John 6: 32, 35-36.

Even in the wilderness when God provided manna from heaven to feed the Israelites, their first reaction to seeing it was, “*What is it?*” God’s supernatural provision as the “*bread from heaven*” was also “*hidden*” from their understanding. Exodus 16: 14-15.

Interestingly enough, after Jesus’ resurrection, He was walking along the road with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, teaching them all things from Scripture that pointed to Him, but they still didn’t recognize Who He was. But, after He “***took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him.***” Luke 24: 30-35. So, the Luke passage is packed with symbolism. Until we eat of Jesus’ body, the “*true bread come down from heaven (that) gives life to the world*”, the Living Bread, the things of God will remain “*hidden*” from our sight. Once we eat of His Body, which was “*broken*” for us, and we are filled with His spiritual sustenance—His Word, and the Living Water, or Holy Spirit—we will see the Hidden Manna for what it is, and not have to say, “*What is it?*” Eating of His Body, the Living Bread or Word, opens up our blind eyes and gives us spiritual sight. I Corinthians 2: 6-16. In Exodus 16: 32-36, God had Aaron prepare a cup of manna to keep always before the Testimony, or the tablets of the Law, in the Ark of the Covenant. Forever this would remind the Israelites of God’s provision. Revelation 11: 19 tells us that the Ark of the Covenant, which has the pot of manna in it, is now in heaven, along with Jesus, the Hidden Manna, or True Bread of heaven. Unless we partake of this Hidden Manna and the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us, both God’s physical and spiritual provisions to sustain our life will remain “*hidden*” from our sight.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that the mystery of the gospel has not remained “hidden” from me and that I have eaten of the Living Bread, the Hidden Manna that is Jesus Christ unto my eternal salvation. Thank You for Your provision and how You sustain my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Hebrews 9: 1-8; Psalm 78: 1-25.

OCTOBER 25—Elect Stone

READ: I Peter 1: 22-2: 10; Isaiah 28: 16-19; Luke 19: 37-40

REFLECT: The Elect Stone that God chose even before creation to be the firm foundation upon which He would build His plan of salvation for mankind is Jesus Christ. As the Elect Stone, He is also the “*Chosen*” Stone, the *only* One who would ever be able to be the perfect sacrifice able to redeem the world from sin. While many men will choose to build their spiritual lives, or houses, upon shifting sand, the Elect Stone that is Jesus Christ is the only foundation that you can build upon that will last forever and allow you to withstand any storm that may come your way during this earthly life. Matthew 7: 24-27.

As the Elect, or Chosen Stone, Jesus is the representation of safety and eternal security for only a few. For most people, unfortunately, He is the “*Stone of Stumbling*”...the One who will bring about their destruction. Have you ever noticed how, when you walk along at a pretty fast pace on a smooth surface, it only takes a small pebble or rough place to make you stumble and fall? So it is with Jesus. Life may be going rather smoothly, but suddenly something gets in the way to make you lose your gait. Most people just kick the stone out of the way and continue on with “their” journey, not stopping to consider why they almost fell. The wise ones will pick up the stone, stop and consider—maybe I am walking too fast, maybe I’m not paying attention to my surroundings, or maybe I need to change “my” way literally, and walk in the way that God would have me to go. The “wise” ones possibly might even carefully examine the stone to seek and search out what it is made of and where it came from...and more importantly, make a point to find out how, and why, it was in the middle of “their” paths and what about it made them stumble. Only that very few will stop when the Elect Stone gets in their way to convict them of their sin. Most will just remove it and go on **their** way, pausing only for a moment. When the Elect Stone is put in your path, it will either cause you to take the path that leads to salvation, or the path that leads to condemnation and judgment. Matthew 7: 12-14. A beautiful thing about the Elect or Chosen Stone is that He is also the *Living Stone* and has “*chosen*” every Christ-follower as “*living stones*”, too. As “*living, elect or chosen stones*”, Jesus is building each of us into a beautiful, spiritual house where the Holy Spirit resides. Consider what our destiny would have been otherwise! Right before the I Peter 2 passage refers to Christ-followers as “*living stones*”, Peter says, “*All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fail, but the Word of the Lord stands forever.*” I Peter 1: 24. So, consider what you did when you encountered the Elect Stone in the road? Did you go on “*your own*” way, not considering that your glory and “petals” would eventually fade, wither and be burned up in the eternal fires of hell; or, did you choose to follow *His* way—the way that God had for you”, becoming a “*living stone*” built up to endure forever as the spiritual house of the Living God? Did you choose to have the Elect Stone firm beneath you for all of eternity? It’s hard to imagine a stone being a “*living*” thing; but, with God all things are possible!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that You have chosen me and that the Holy Spirit got my attention to convict me of my sin unto salvation when I stumbled upon the Elect Stone that is Jesus. I pray that You will use me to boldly and lovingly share the gospel message with those you place in my path who are stumbling on Jesus, the Elect Stone. In His name. Amen

FURTHER STUDY: Joshua 24: 27 (1-28); Matthew 16: 13-20; Psalm 118: 17-24.

OCTOBER 26—Grain Offering

READ: Leviticus 2: 1-10; 6: 14-23; Ephesians 5: 1-2

REFLECT: The grain offering was one of three offerings that was a “*most holy*” offering “*made by fire*” unto the Lord, the other two being the burnt offering and the peace offering. All three of these offerings were “*most holy*” and pleasing to God because they were a prophetic representation of different aspects of Christ’s sacrificial death for the sins of the world. The grain offering was the only of these three “*most holy*” offerings that had a part of it that was given as a “*memorial*” portion unto the Lord, the rest being given to the priests.

The sin and trespass offerings were to be made by sinning offenders. With repentant and contrite hearts, they were to offer these sacrifices to God, asking Him for forgiveness of their sins and their disobedience. Therefore, neither of these offerings was pleasing to the Lord because of the sin involved. Psalm 51: 17. One of the choices for offerings of grain was to consist of “*fine*” uncooked flour, “*fine*” having the same meaning as that used for “*unblemished*”—the same requirement for animals in burnt offerings. While the burnt offering represented the perfection of Christ’ sacrifice, and the peace offering represented the reconciliation that Jesus’ sacrifice made between God and man, the grain offering was symbolic of Jesus’ “*total devotion to God in giving His life to please the Father...*” (“*MacArthur Study Bible*”; Note to Ephesians 5: 2). Also, the burnt offering and the peace offering were completely consumed by fire, and were totally offered only to God. The priests did not partake of either of these offerings. The “*perfection*” represented in the burnt offering and the “*reconciliation*” symbolized by the peace offering had to be given only to the Lord in order to satisfy the debt owed for sin. Without the “*perfect*” sacrifice or the “*reconciliation*” being made, the offerings would be worthless.

The grain offering, however, was also representative of the sacrificial love of God—God’s love in providing His only Son—and Jesus’ love in completely and freely giving of His life to save the world from sin. As Jesus said, in John 12: 24-25, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it procures much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*” The grain offering was a symbolic love offering of God being offered to the priests, the intercessors for the people. As Christ-followers, we are all made high priests, or intercessors by the blood of Christ. Another interesting aspect of the grain offering is that it is the only offering that didn’t involve an animal sacrifice, and it was offered in conjunction with a drink offering. In much the same way, Jesus offers Himself to us as the Living Bread (grain offering) and the Living Water (drink offering). John 6: 51; 4: 10. So, the Grain Offering—the love of God through Jesus Christ—is given to us as Living Bread and Living Water through the Word made Living by the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit—the free love gift of eternal life.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus was the Grain Offering Who sacrificially fell to the ground and died so that I could be given eternal life. Help me to give back to You by offering His love sacrificially to others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: John 12: 24-26; 4: 10; 6: 51.

OCTOBER 27—Messenger of the Covenant

READ: Malachi 3: 1; Luke 22: 14-23; II Corinthians 3: 1-6

REFLECT: The Messenger of the Covenant is the Lord! Jesus came to this earth to fulfill the Old Covenant and to establish a New Covenant by His birth, life, death and resurrection. The whole of Chapter 8 of Hebrews explains the superiority of the New Covenant, relative to that of the Old Covenant. Hebrews 8: 6-13.

The Old Covenant kept a record of sins and required continual sacrifices of animals in order to atone for those sins. Praise God for His New Covenant! And, praise God for the Messenger of that Covenant, His Son, Jesus Christ! Jesus' blood atones for our sins once and for all. No longer do priests need to stand and offer sacrifices for sin, day after day. Hebrews 10: 11.

Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant by providing His body as the perfect and final sacrifice for all sin. At the same time, a New Covenant was established. This New Covenant does not bind us to the Law but rather sets us free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8: 1-17. It must be remembered, though, that the freedom we have in Christ does not give us the right to live simply to please ourselves and gratify our own desires. Jesus instructs us in Mark 12: 29-31:

“‘The most important commandment,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.’”

While we have freedom from the Law as Christ-followers, we are still commanded to live as new creations in Christ. II Corinthians 5: 17. Our lives need to bear fruit and show evidence of God's grace in our lives. Matthew 5: 1-16; Galatians 5: 22-24. As Christ-followers, we cannot take this New Covenant for granted. Rather, our lives need to reflect the fact that we are sinners saved by the grace of a mighty, loving and living God—the Messenger of the Covenant.

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that I am not bound by all the restrictions of the Law. I thank You that I am no longer a slave to sin and death; but, because of Jesus—the Messenger of the New Covenant—I have been transferred into the Kingdom of light and have become Your child. Help me by the power of the Holy Spirit to live in such a way that my life demonstrates that the blood of Jesus has brought me under the New Covenant so that I can be a “messenger of the gospel” to the lost around me—a messenger of life eternal! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Hebrews 8: 1-13.

OCTOBER 28—Branch of Righteousness

READ: Jeremiah 23: 5-6; 33:12-18; John 15: 1-8

REFLECT: From the beginning, man has fought against God's rule and authority. In Genesis 1: 26, God said, "*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,*"; and, in Genesis 2: 15-17, He commanded, "*Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of (the) knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die!*" The name for God used in Genesis 1 is Elohim, which is plural in meaning. While this was probably the first symbolic reference to the triune nature of God, kings also spoke of themselves in plural terms because it denoted "majesty". Here, God was establishing His Kingship and authority over creation and man. Furthermore, in Genesis 2: 15-17, God was also letting man know that He alone had the right to judge between good and evil, all such wisdom belonging only to Him. However, man had a different idea that plunged all creation into the darkness of sin, so the story continued in a cyclic pattern, right up to the time that God established the nation of Israel as a holy nation unto Himself.

God was saying to man, "Let's try this '*ruling and reigning*' thing again", knowing how the story would proceed. God called the Israelites out as a holy nation, setting them aside unto Himself, while at the same time establishing a system of priests and judges to rule over them by His authority. But, the people would not have it! They wanted a king like everybody else in the world. So God gave them a king. But this would not work either. When God is not ruling, sin is! However, God is patient and persistent. He will not give up!

Under King David, the only king ever called "a man after God's own heart", God would make a covenant promise to establish David's throne forever as a Righteous branch rising up from the tribe of Judah. From him would come a Branch that would rule and reign for all eternity. Jeremiah 23: 5. Not only would this Branch be a **king**, but He would also be a **priest** forever. In Zechariah 6: 12-15, God tells of a time when the "BRANCH" will, "*...build the temple of the Lord, ...bear the glory...sit and rule on His throne, so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace be between them both.*" From the period of the kings and the time of the Babylonian exile, the political power rested under the king, while the religious authority rested in the high-priest. Each position came from the line of the tribes of Judah and Levi, respectively. As usual, sin would reign supreme and both offices would eventually become defiled. But, the purposes and plans of our Holy God cannot be defiled or thwarted. Considering this, doesn't the "separation of church and state" take on a whole new meaning and significance?! Out of the Rod of Jesse, the Root of David, would come Jesus Christ, the Branch of Righteousness! Even though He, the Branch, would be "cut off" at His First Coming, out of the old stump would come a "new sprout". Daniel 9: 26. The Hebrew word for "branch" means "*green shoot*" or "*new sprout out of an old stump*". Even though it appeared as if the Branch was dead and gone, the "green shoot" of the promised Holy Spirit would come to rule and reign in the hearts of men!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Jesus came as the Branch of Righteousness, both King and High-Priest. May He always rule and reign in my heart. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Isaiah 4: 2; Zechariah 3: 8; 6: 12-13; Genesis 1: 26; 2: 15-17.

OCTOBER 29—God Our Savior

READ: Luke 1: 46-47; Jude 24-25; II Samuel 22: 3; Titus 3: 4-7

REFLECT: Titus 3: 4-6—*“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior....”*

The above passage is amazing to me in that it expresses the three aspects of Man’s salvation by showing how all three parts of the Trinity have a part to play. First of all, the whole plan was put in motion by the love of God our Savior. Then, the last phrase expresses, literally, how the blood of Jesus Christ our Savior, through propitiation, was *“poured out on us abundantly”*, to redeem us from the debt owed for our sins. And, finally, the Holy Spirit washes us, *“regenerating and renewing”* us through sanctification by the Word. But, another wonderful thing that tops it all off, is that it was all done through God our Savior’s mercy, not by anything we could ever do. How incredible!

The pure and perfect plan of God Our Savior to reconcile us to Him, removing the horrible stain of our sins, is the most amazing display of love—a love that our finite minds can never fully fathom or measure. Aaron Shust does a beautiful job of expressing this awesome and enigmatic wonder in a song called *“My Savior My God”*:

*“I am not skilled to understand what God has willed, what God has planned.
I only know at His right hand, stands One who is my Savior.
I take Him at His Word and deed. Christ died to save me this I read.
And in my heart I find a need, for Him to be my Savior.
That He would leave His place on high and come for sinful man to die.
You count it strange, so once did I, before I knew my Savior.
My Savior loves, my Savior lives, my Savior’s always there for me.
My God He was, My God He is, My God He’s always gonna be.
Yes, living, dying, let me bring...my strength, my solace from this spring,
That He who lives to be my King, once died to be my Savior.”*

PRAY: Compose and record a prayer as you meditate upon the words to this song and thank God for His love that saved you by His incredible plan that sent Jesus to die to be Your Savior. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: Isaiah 45: 21; 52: 10; Psalm 68: 19; 79: 9; 106: 21; I Timothy 1: 1; 4: 10; II Peter 1: 1.

OCTOBER 30—Eternal Life

READ: I John 5: 20; Romans 5: 6-11

REFLECT: Jesus was not simply a man who performed good deeds during His time on earth. Yes, Jesus lived on earth in human form. But, at the same time, He was the fullness of deity! This man, who was fully human and fully God came so that we could have eternal life. And that eternal life begins from the moment we believe and continues on forever after we take our last breath here on earth! Ephesians 1: 11-14; II Corinthians 5: 8. Jesus came to give us an abundant life, both here and now—one that continues on forever into all of eternity! John 10: 10.

John 1: 1-4 defines Jesus as being “*the Word*”. The Word is God and it is life, but not in the sense that it keeps our blood pumping and our heart beating. Rather, the Word provides us with a guideline for living a life pleasing to God here on earth and ultimately for living eternally with Him in heaven forever. Without the Word, our life as Christ-followers would not be worth living. We would have no direction and, therefore, would most likely only be going through the motions, living for the moment, and seeking only to gratify our immediate desires. Praise God for revealing His purposes for us through His Word and for shining His light upon our paths. He reveals each step that we need to take in obedience to Him in order to live the abundant life that Jesus came to give us. Psalm 119: 105; John 10: 10. His Word establishes our boundaries in spacious places. Psalm 16: 6; 18: 19.

Jesus willingly underwent separation from His Father and a brutal death on a wooden cross in order that each Christ-follower could have eternal life in Him—the Word that became flesh and dwelled among us. Romans 5: 6-11; John 1: 1-4, 14. Jesus Himself said that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life—the One Who humbled Himself, considering His deity as nothing so that He could redeem us from our sin and reconcile us to God through His death and resurrection—the only One Who could bring eternal life to a world condemned to death because of their sin. He was the Only Way to the Father. John 14: 1-6.

It seems paradoxical that in order for us to live, Someone had to die...that Someone being Jesus, God’s Only Begotten Son. It seems odd that Someone so perfect would give His life for so many imperfect people—in fact for the whole world. Romans 5: 8; John 3: 16. This was God’s plan from the beginning. It was also His plan that the grave and death would not have a hold on His Son so that all who would believe in Him would not be held as slaves unto the grave and sin as well. After three days in the grave, when the stone was rolled away to reveal an empty tomb, death was swallowed up in victory and eternal life for all Christ-followers was ushered in! He has risen! He defeated death and lives forever! In Jesus and Jesus alone, all who believe in Him will have Eternal Life! Hallelujah! What a Savior!

PRAY: Father God, I thank You that Your love for me was so great that Jesus willingly gave His life so that I might have eternal life with You. Thank You that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life! Thank You also for the abundant life I have now because He died, so that I might live, not only for now but for all of eternity! In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY: John 1: 1-4, 14: 1-6; 17: 3.

OCTOBER 31—Jesus Christ

READ: Matthew 1: 1, 18-21; Luke 1: 26-33; Mark 1: 1; Philippians 2: 5-11

REFLECT: Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Jesus the Christ and the Lord Jesus Christ are the different combinations of the two names of our Savior, “*Jesus*” and “*Christ*” that are used throughout the New Testament. The first time the name is used in the Bible is in Matthew 1: 1, when the genealogy of Jesus Christ is given; and, the last time it is used is in Revelation 22: 21, the last verse of the Bible which says, “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*” The name “*Jesus*” is the name that God commanded both Joseph and Mary to give the Son born to them of the Holy Spirit—the Only Begotten Son of God. Mathew 1: 21; Luke 1: 31. While Mary physically gave birth to Jesus, she was only the vessel through which Jesus Christ, the One and Only God-Man would become flesh. Joseph was Mary’s betrothed, and while he had no part in the physical conception of Jesus, he was Jesus’ earthly father and Jesus was his legal heir according to Jewish law and custom. Jesus the Christ has always been, is and will forever be. Having no beginning or end, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was God incarnate—God in human flesh. John 1: 1-4, 14. “*Jesus*” is a derivation of the Hebrew names “*Yeshua, Joshua or Jehoshua*” which mean “*Jehovah is salvation*”, or “*savior*”. Especially for Jews, a person’s name was extremely significant. Jesus was the personal name of the Son of God, the name that was to be given to Him in His humanity. “*Christ*” is from the Greek word “*Christos*” and means “*anointed one*”. It is the exact Hebrew equivalent of the word for “*Messiah*”, which also means “*anointed one*”. “*Christ*” is also related to the Greek word “*Chrism*” which means “*perfumed oil*”, and in the classical Greek, “*covered in oil*”. Throughout the Old Testament, those who were anointed with oil were particularly set apart by God to be kings, priests or prophets.

So, Christ was the “title” given to Jesus to establish His divinity, setting Him apart as the “specifically anointed One” sent by God to be a “king”, “high-priest” and “prophet”. He was the Only perfect and pure One that God, from eternity past, had planned to send to save the world from sin. Although Matthew 7: 12-14 tells us that only a few will be redeemed by His blood, yet one day soon, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God His Father. Amen! Philippians 2: 9-11; Romans 14: 10-11. Who is Jesus Christ to you? Record your thoughts.

PRAY: Today, meditate upon the words to the praise song “*Once Again*” by Matt Redman and compose a prayer thanking God for sending Jesus Christ. In the days to come, ask God to show you in a deeper way, just Who He is to you.

“Jesus Christ, I think upon Your sacrifice. You became nothing, poured out to death.

Many times I’ve wondered at Your gift of life, and I’m in that place again.

And once again I look upon the cross where You died.

I’m humbled by Your mercy and I’m broken inside. Once again I thank You, once again I pour out my life.

Now You are exalted to the highest place. King of the heavens, where one day I’ll bow.

But for now, I marvel at this saving grace, and I’m full of praise once again.

Thank You for the cross. Thank You for the cross. Thank You for the cross, My Friend!”

In Jesus Christ’ name we pray. Amen.

