madenew

with Andrew & Wendy Palau + will you let God transform you?

mind — Understand your new identity.

ears — Hear God's Living Word—the Bible.

mouth — Talk to God—prayer.

heart — Cleanse your heart—forgiveness.

lungs — Receive power to live in purpose—Holy Spirit.

hands — Connect with God's family—the Church.

feet — Go and share the Good News of Jesus.

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WELCOME

You are made new.

Dear Friend,

You prayed to receive Jesus Christ. You just made the best decision of your life and we are rejoicing with you! Whether you prayed that prayer for the first time, or are returning to God, you are at the beginning of an amazing journey. It's a life of growing closer to God and being made new by Him, day by day.

And, you know what? You are not alone on this journey. Jesus is with you—offering personal friendship for the rest of your days. You are a child of the Living God—a part of His family! And we want to walk alongside you, cheering you on and guiding you—because this is a road we're on too.

We hope this book will make you feel encouraged, supported, and welcomed. We hope it helps your first steps as a Christian to be simple and beautiful. And we pray that through it, you'll see our wonderful, loving God so clearly.

...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 CSB

When we decide to follow Jesus, we are made new. It's not just a ticket to Heaven. It's a way of being—you're giving God, maker of the universe, access to change you from the inside out.

In Jesus, we see the perfect image of God—His original purpose for everything He created.

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

COLOSSIANS 1:15 NLT

Can you believe it—God made us to be like HIM? On our own, we may be a mess—but God who made you has made a way for you to be transformed. Living and loving like Jesus is the most joyful way to live.

These promises are yours…

You are forgiven through the cross of Jesus. You are born anew!

You are God's child, adopted into His family.

You have a life worth living and the promise of Heaven.

And you are not alone. God will never leave you. His Spirit lives in you and will help you to thrive as a child of God.

You will play a role in the ongoing story of God's amazing love for the world. This is a beautiful turning point in your life, and we are so glad to be sharing it with you. Be assured that He holds you in the palm of His hand and that He cares deeply for you. Your future is secure and your purpose has been restored—we are here to support you as you begin to live in the gift of salvation which God has given you.

Don't give up! It's going to be okay.

God is greater than the discouragement that will come.

There's an enemy who wants you to stop following Jesus. We don't bring this up to scare you—but rather, to encourage you to not give up on following God, even when times get tough. Here's what Jesus says about this enemy, often called Satan or the devil:

> *The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*
>
> **JOHN 10:10 NLT**

God wants to give you life and peace and joy—and He doesn't expect you to earn it by being perfect. He gives it freely. But this thief wants to steal your joy and destroy your life. This liar wants to fill your heart with thoughts like, "How could you believe that God loves you? You're such a mess. You're not good enough for God. Your life hasn't changed—everything is the same. This isn't working." Do not listen to those lies! And remember, you're at the beginning of a life-long journey. Don't give up when the road gets bumpy.

Accepting Jesus does not mean that your life is perfect and free of struggles. But **one step at a time,** we are here to help you move forward in your relationship with God. He has broken the power of sin and death in your life, and will continue to be with you. Even when you fail, He will help you to get back on your feet, living out His beautiful purposes for you. **A moment of rebirth leads to a lifetime of adjustments as you mature in Christ.** With God, you can live in the deep satisfaction only Jesus brings. *Don't give up.* We want you to know—you're going to be okay. You're going to be better than okay! Take it one day at a time. We will encourage you on your journey.

Rejoicing with you,

Andrew and Wendy Palau

Pray today...

as you start the most wonderful journey of your life.

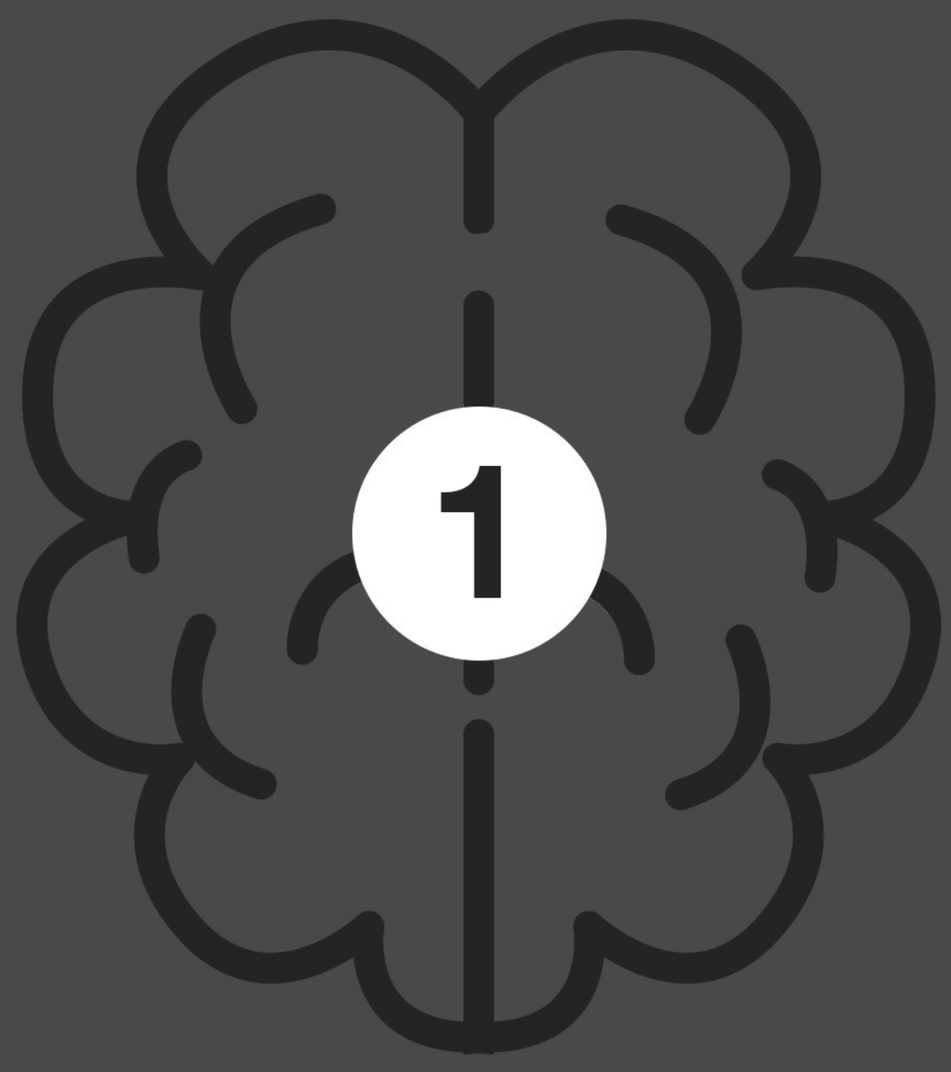
GOD,

I want to be transformed by You. I want to know You more deeply and to experience Your abundant life. Will you protect me and guide me today—as my Good Father who loves me? Guard my life from the enemy who wants to destroy me. Give me grace to follow You one day at a time.

Here's what you can expect as you begin your journey.

This book uses the human body as a guide. Traveling from head to toe, the seven chapters will explore aspects of your new life with Jesus.

Each section includes questions to help you think about your own experiences, scriptures that will help orient you to your new life, and guided prayers to strengthen your relationship with God.



Understand your new identity.

Who God is makes me who I am.

Celebrate!

You have a new identity in Christ.

Now that you have been reborn in Christ, and have come into His light, you have a new identity. **You've**

turned away from the empty things that filled your life. The old has passed away and the new has come.

> *Jesus died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. . . . anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*
>
> **2 CORINTHIANS 5:15,17 NLT**

Your identity—who you truly are—is now shaped by who God is. God's Word is the best source for understanding who you are in Christ.

> *... joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.*
>
> **COLOSSIANS 1:12-13 NLT**

If you've ever been awake early enough to see the sunrise you know the power of this image. What was hidden by the darkness—what seemed scary before—is now clearly visible. We hope this chapter helps bring understanding and clarity to what it means to be made new.

Pray today...

as you grow in understanding your new identity.

THANK YOU, LORD,

for this new life You have given me. I have so much to learn, and there are many areas of my life that need Your help. I invite You to begin to renew my mind and allow my new identity as Your child to influence every part of my life. Change the way I see myself in the world. In Jesus' name, amen.

Five simple truths to transform you.

Have you ever felt like you're an accident? You are not a mistake. You're not a coincidence. God created you. He knew everything about you—even while you were still in your mother's womb.

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

PSALM 139:13-16 NLT

You were formed by your Creator with love! He didn't make you by chance. He didn't make you just to do work for Him, as though you were one of many tools in His toolbox. **He designed you uniquely—on purpose. He made you to love Him, receive His love, and to share that love with others. Nothing can separate you from this love!**

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:38-39 NIV

Years ago you were born with a heartbeat and a body. You were given a name. That was your first birth—your *physical birth*. But when you accepted Christ's offer of new life, you were born again! This time it was a *spiritual birth*. The part of you that's capable of connecting to God and living forever came to life. Now that you belong to God, nothing can separate you from His love.

What does it mean to be a child of God? You have a Heavenly Father who will never fail you. He nurtures, loves, guides, and welcomes you. You are not just a worker or a servant to Him.

> *God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.*
>
> **EPHESIANS 1:5 NLT**

What are your parents like? Whether our parents were wonderfully kind or painfully harsh, we've all experienced hurt from them. People aren't perfect like God. God is everything we need.

He's the Father who sought you out and brought you close to Him. He knows you completely and is able to love you perfectly.

> *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*
>
> **ROMANS 8:15 ESV**

You are not a slave or a spiritual orphan with no one to care for you. Through Jesus Christ, Father God has adopted you into His family. He pours out His affection on you. He is so pleased to call you His own! **You belong.**

WHO GOD IS *makes me* WHO I AM

Jesus is my Savior. I am free!

Before we met Jesus, we were not free at all. We were slaves to sin, on our way to eternal death. We were trapped by our own desires, our guilt, and our shame. But when you accepted Christ as Savior, you received the freedom for which He paid the ultimate price—death on a cross.

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving

Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

ROMANS 8:1-2 NLT

Being free in Christ doesn't mean that you'll never sin or make a mistake again, but it does mean **you're not a slave to sin anymore**. It also means that because Jesus paid the price for sin—you don't have to! You don't need to punish yourself or do anything to earn your redemption. Jesus' work on the cross has taken care of all that. **Death and guilt no longer have any claim on you!**

Much like you had a *physical birth* and a *spiritual birth*, you will someday have a physical death. Until Jesus returns to make all things right, none of us can escape that. But because of Jesus, you are free from the spiritual consequences of sin, so **you will not die a spiritual death**. After your body passes away, your spirit—and a brand new body—will live on, in the face-to-face presence of God.

So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

JOHN 8:36 NLT

Believe it, friend! You are free from the penalty of your sin—eternal death. You are free from the power of sin. You are free from condemnation. **You have a life worth living and the promise of Heaven.**

What do you think?

Pause to rejoice. Make a list of some of the things Christ has freed you from.

"Forgiven" is not just a thing that happened to you. Because of Jesus, "forgiven" is part of who you are. When God looks at you, He does not see everything you've ever done wrong. He sees you washed clean—whiter than snow—through the blood of His Son, Jesus. *Will you stumble into sin from time to time?* Yes—we all do. *Will that change how God sees you? Will that affect your identity before Him?* Nope. <u>You are forgiven.</u>

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

1 JOHN 1:9 NLT

There will be moments of disobedience, but our God always forgives, always loves, and is always making new. Any time you stumble, you can come boldly to Him, trusting that He's willing and able to forgive. You can have faith Jesus' sacrifice was strong enough to cleanse you from all your sins—of the past, present, and the future!

...let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.

HEBREWS 10:22–23 NLT

Because of what Jesus has done, and because of God's love for us, it's easy for God to forgive us. But it's sometimes hard for us to forgive ourselves. If you ever feel like you're drowning in feelings of guilt, let these words of truth bring you comfort:

As high as heaven is over the earth,
so strong is his love to those who fear him.
And as far as sunrise is from sunset,
he has separated us from our sins.

PSALM 103:11–12 MSG

Jesus bore all our shame—it's gone! Our guilt is washed away. Let's rejoice in all that Jesus has done for us and live in the light of His great forgiveness. When He makes you clean, you are truly clean.

What do you think?

How does being forgiven make you feel?

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the troubles of life? You don't have to face them alone. When you accepted Jesus, the Holy Spirit came to live within you! The Bible sometimes calls the Holy Spirit, "the Advocate." This means He is always with you, directing you to the truth. He clears a path in front of you and always has your back. He is the One who connects you and helps you hear the Living Word of God.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.

He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you.

JOHN 14:16-18 NLT

The Holy Spirit is one person of the three-person God. Because He lives within you, you have a direct connection with God, every moment of your life. He will never abandon you. He is the One who is present—right now—and able to help! The Spirit of God will help you to thrive as a child of God. You can call on Him for support.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

JOHN 14:26 ESV

The Holy Spirit works on our hearts, minds, souls, and spirits. He helps us understand God, and to love Him and others well. He is transforming you day by day.

What do you think?

How does it feel to know that you're inhabited by the Living God?

THIS WEEK:

Tell another believer that you prayed to accept Jesus.

You are a new person—let someone know.

You just began the journey of a lifetime. Although you have been reborn all at once, you are also beginning a new process of growth. You don't have to go through

all these changes alone. God designed you to go on this journey alongside other Christ followers.

Do you have a close friend or family member who believes? Now is a great time to tell a believer you trust that you have given your life to Jesus. They can share in your joy and encourage you when struggles come. Like iron sharpening iron, you will make each other's faith stronger!

Where can I find another believer? If none of your close friends or family are believers, consider telling someone in your workplace, in your neighborhood, or school. Maybe there's a friend from a past season of life who you know would be excited for you.

This is news worth sharing! Telling your stories, and hearing the stories of others will help strengthen your commitment to Christ and fill you with hope for the future.

Will you accept the challenge to call, write, or tell someone about your new life in Christ today? **Try it out and see what God will do.**

Don't give up!

It's going to be okay.

The Christian journey is a marathon. It's not a sprint. On your journey, you may already be facing some challenges. That's completely normal—you are not alone in these struggles. Believers all around the world face challenges each day and we're in this together.

Do you feel like there's a war going on in your mind?

There really is! The Bible describes your mind as a battlefield. You've decided to follow Jesus and align your life around His Word, and the enemy desires to pull you away, tricking you with words of doubt. Don't be fooled. You made the right choice and you ARE who He says you are.

> *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...*
>
> **2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-5 ESV**

The adversary will try to convince you that *you're not who God says you are—not good enough, not pure*

enough, and not worthy of God's love. We need to fight this battle by replacing the words of the liar with words of truth from the Bible. And this is something you'll learn to do over time. The Bible says that *you are His—a chosen and completely loved child of God, completely washed clean by Jesus' blood, and completely saved out of death for a wonderful purpose.* Your **identity** is no longer in the world and God is helping you to grow and mature in your faith.■

Hear God's Living Word—the Bible.

Relationships are all about communication—but as a new Christian, you may be wondering, ***"How in the world do I communicate with God? How do I hear from Him?"***

—Andrew Palau

Celebrate!

The Bible—God's Living Word—is how God communicates with us.

God has shown Himself to humanity in many ways but He speaks to us most clearly through the Bible. To nurture your relationship with Him, It's essential to hear Him speak through His Word.

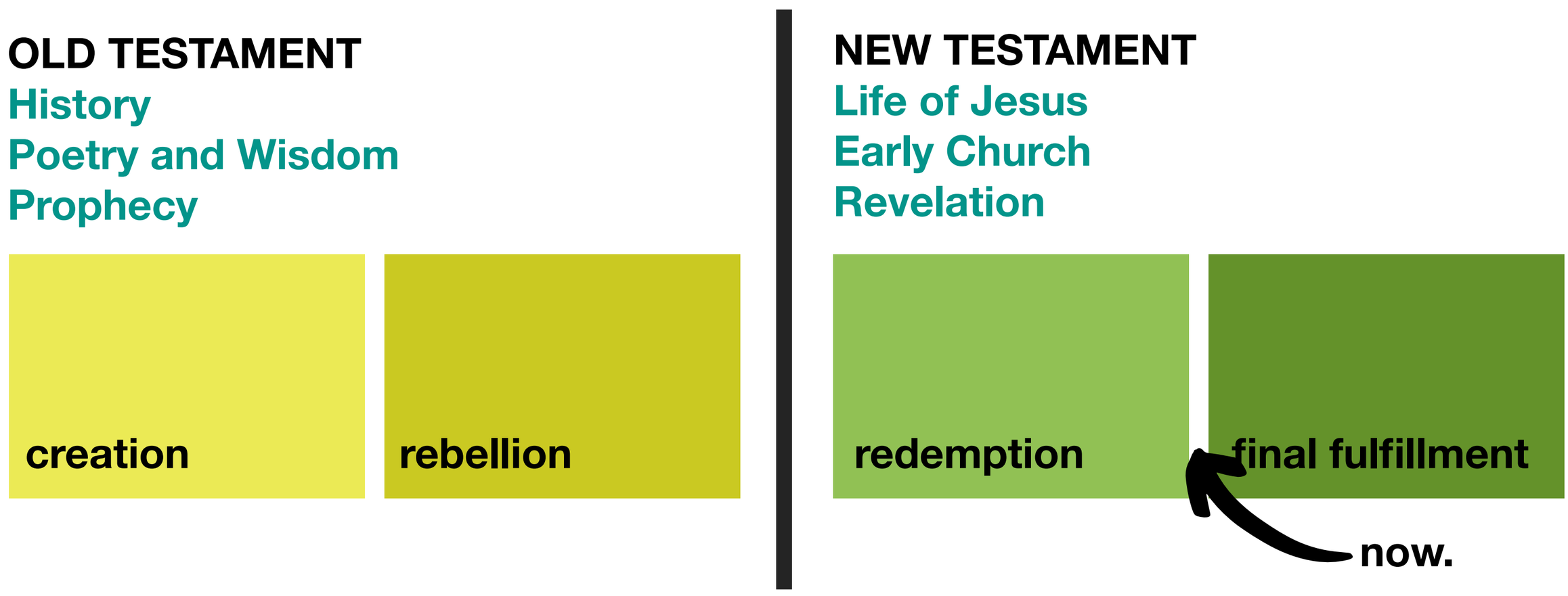
It's no ordinary book! It's not just a history book, great literature, or a list of commands. ***It is living and active.***

> *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*
>
> **HEBREWS 4:12 NIV**

What other book claims to have this kind of effect? The Bible helps us to see God rightly, to know Him deeply, and to have our lives shaped by His instruction.

Although God used 40 authors over 1500 years to write the Bible, this is also a book about today. There is ***one message*** that is woven throughout the Bible's pages. ***God is at the heart of the story,*** faithfully and relentlessly loving us, even sending His Son to rescue

us. God's love is evident from beginning to end. **The main plot of the Bible covers the events of creation, humanity's rebellion, redemption, and final fulfillment.** We are now living in the time between redemption (Jesus going to the cross and conquering the enslaving power of sin to save us) and final fulfillment (Jesus returning to the earth and making all things right).



The New Testament tells the story of Jesus' life on this earth—his birth, his miracles, his death, and resurrection. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies that speak about the promise of the coming Messiah and stories that show humanity's deep need for a savior.

This is now your story, friend—the story of how your salvation came to be. It's a story of hope for you—of what your life can look like when it's transformed by God. **The promises of the Bible are yours!**

Pray today...

as you learn to hear God's Word.

LORD,

from the moment I wake up each morning until I lay down my head to sleep, let me hear Your voice above all worldly noise. May Your Word lead and guide every decision that I make. May Your Word be a light to my path as I travel the road of life. Speak to me, Lord. I am listening.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Five simple truths to transform you.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JOHN 1:14 NIV

Jesus is sometimes called The Word of God. When He walked the earth, Jesus was *truth with skin on*. You have access to that same truth through God's Word, the Bible. His love, goodness, and grace toward you will become clearer and clearer as you read about the life of Jesus.

What was His personality like? How did He treat people? Did He ever get angry? How did He respond when people failed Him? What did He say to his closest friends before He died? He might be different than you thought!

There are many different ideas about what Jesus was like but there is only one way to find out for yourself. You get to go straight to the Word of God, the ***source of truth***, the Holy Scriptures. As you fill your heart and mind with scripture, you'll develop a rich confidence in the perfectly good God who authored all of creation.

What do you think?

What are you most curious to discover about Jesus?

The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?

JEREMIAH 17:9 NLT

Reading the Bible brings conviction to our hearts. It helps us see where our thoughts, feelings, and actions have strayed from God's glorious standard. It leads us to turn our lives toward Christ in those areas. This can be challenging at first—change is hard. It may feel like a sword cutting into your life. The sword of God's

Word does not work to destroy you but rather to free you. The Word of God cuts our hearts like a skilled, loving, gentle surgeon, removing all that's sick so that we can heal.

> *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*
>
> **HEBREWS 4:12 NIV**

Scripture will help you change course when you're headed down a path of destruction. Habits of sin that poison the heart may take a while to break but reading the Bible will help you to recognize them. God will strengthen you through this gradual process of becoming healthy, whole, and free.

Right and wrong will seem clearer, as though you're looking through a new pair of glasses. You might notice that your desires and thoughts are changing. This is God's truth at work in your heart! New God-inspired desires may start to appear. This fresh inspiration can strengthen you as you live in God's will for your life.

What do you think?

Have any of your desires changed since you started reading the Bible?

With so many opinions in the world, how can we possibly know what's right? The world's ideas about how a person should act, think, and believe are always changing. God's Word brings understanding of His will, renews your mind, and helps you to understand what is right and wrong. The Bible is pure truth which never changes. It separates truth from lies. It will change the way you think and can save you from living to earn the approval of the world.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but ***let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.*** *Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

ROMANS 12:2 NLT

Here are some ways God's Word will change the way you think:

The world tells you that taking care of yourself is the first priority, but **God says** to put others first.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

PHILLIPPIANS 2:3-4 ESV

The world tells you that you're more respectable if you have money, but **the Word says** the love of money destroys us.

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

1 TIMOTHY 6:10 NLT

The world tells you to reject those who reject you, but **the Bible tells us** to love even our enemies.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."

MATTHEW 5:43-44 NKJV

God's ways are better than our ways. His thoughts are better than our thoughts. **We can rely on His truth to lead us well.**

What do you think?

How is the Bible changing the way you think about yourself and the world?

Can you imagine what it would be like to journey through the wilderness in the dark? Maybe you'd get scared, lost, or trip and fall into danger. Sometimes walking through life feels like embarking on a dark journey without a map. But God's Word is the light of truth, shining in the dark. Let its timeless wisdom direct your choices. Look to God's Living Word to illuminate the right path. **You don't have to stumble and wander—God will lead you through His word!**

How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
I gain understanding from your precepts;
therefore I hate every wrong path.
Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.

PSALM 119:103-105 NIV

Through His Word, God guides us on paths of grace. It is such a comfort to know that even when the road of life gets rocky, when we might wonder if we have taken a wrong turn, we can trust that God's Word will not lead us astray! His Word will show you—like a flashlight—when to turn, rescuing you from danger.

When life seems to crumble around you, Holy Scripture stands faithful and strong. Right in the middle of death, suffering, hatred, confusion, hopelessness—God guards us and guides us as our Good Shepherd. By His Word, God keeps us from going the wrong way or falling into fear, despair, and the destructive plans of the enemy. He illuminates even the darkest path.

He restores my soul; He leads me in the
paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You
are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they
comfort me.

PSALM 23:3-4 NKJV

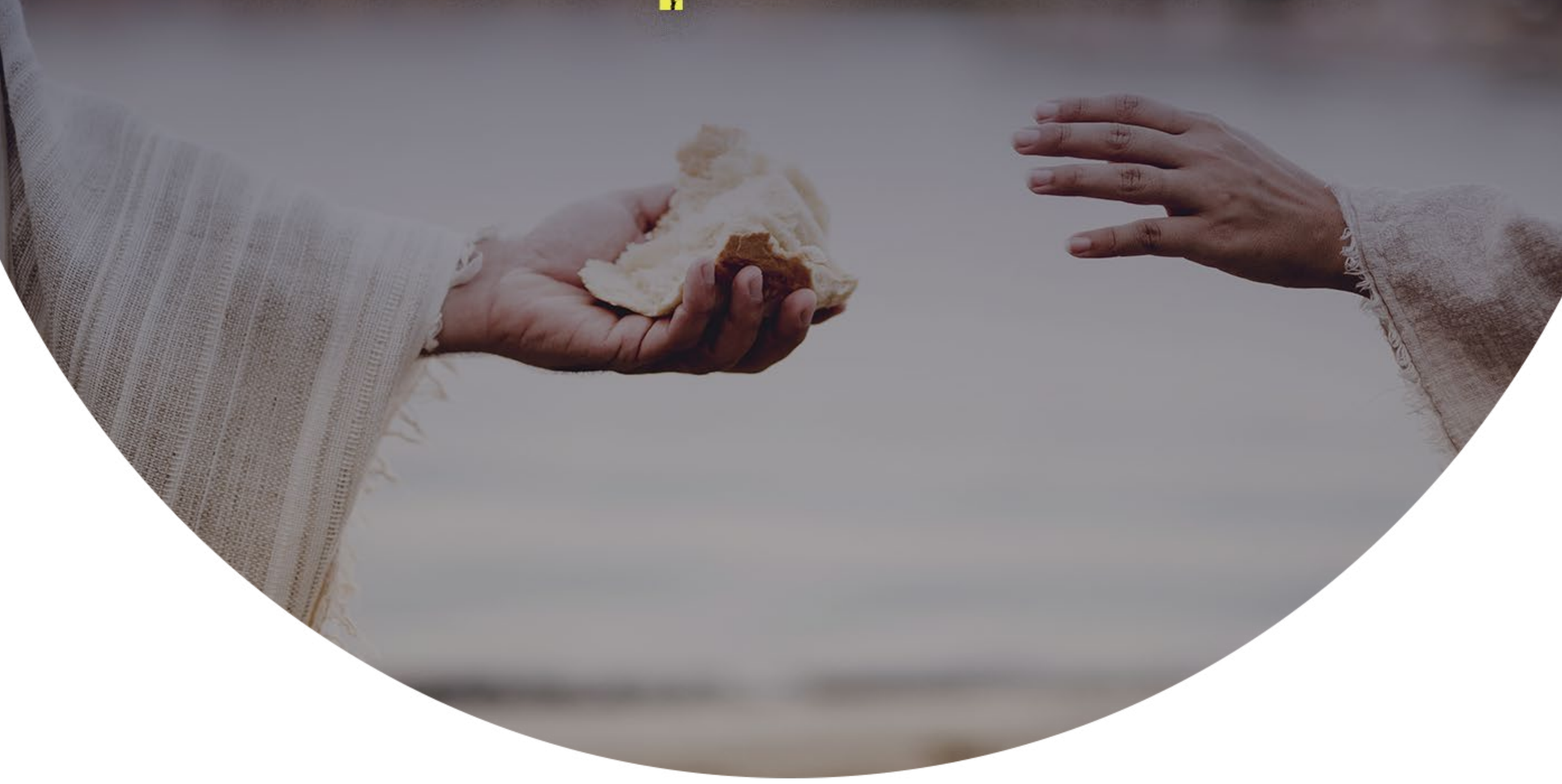
What do you think?

How will the Bible change the way you make your life-choices?

05

THE LIVING WORD

feeds your spirit with God's promises.



Are you hungry? Just as food satisfies the body, giving you energy and filling your stomach, the Word of God feeds and nourishes your spirit. Without this type of nurturing, your spirit would slowly starve. God wants to satisfy all your inner, spiritual hunger as you encounter Him through His word.

But he answered, "It is written, 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

MATTHEW 4:4 ESV

God's Word is the main course in your daily spiritual diet. **Come to the Word of life, and feast on the only food that can truly fill all your deepest longings…**

- **Your longing** to love and be loved
- **Your longing** to know God and be known by Him
- **Your longing** to be transformed and become more like Him
- **Your longing** to fulfill your God-given destiny

These are spiritual hungers that need to be fed with spiritual food. They are all promised and fulfilled by God through Christ. Jesus talked about spiritual food when He said:

> *"I have food to eat that you do not know about."*
> *So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?"*
> *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."*
> **JOHN 4:32–34 ESV**

By feasting on the truth of scripture, you can begin to walk in every good promise of His will.

What do you think?

Can you think of a deep hunger of the soul that wasn't mentioned above? How do you think the Word might satisfy it?

THIS WEEK:

Start reading the Gospel of John—just one chapter per day.

Getting started.

It can be overwhelming to know where to start reading the Bible. Try reading the Gospel of John first. It's 21 short chapters. Start with just **one chapter per day and in three weeks you will have a clearer picture**

of who God is through the life of Jesus. Then when you're ready for more, consider reading the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to understand more about how God birthed and grew the Church.

Regardless of where you start, be encouraged that if you follow God's instruction, **He will change your life in ways you haven't even imagined yet. God's promises in the Bible are yours, and they will transform you.** We are praying that God speaks to you this week as you read the Bible. Don't just take our word for it—look for yourself. Find out what Jesus is really like by reading the Bible! Try it out and see what God will do—start reading today.

Let the Word work in you.

In the book of John, you will discover that Jesus was unlike anyone else who ever lived. He even experienced the same challenges you do! You'll be challenged and inspired to love others the way Christ loves them. As you read, think about how and why Jesus does things. Think about how you can follow in the footsteps of your Savior—the perfect example of how to live and love.

Let it sink in.

Reading small bits of the Bible at a time gives you a chance to think about what you've read and absorb it into your heart. Remember, these are not just good

stories, they are powerful, life-changing truths! You may want to journal your thoughts about how each chapter you read changes your life. You might want to copy down parts of the Bible that were especially striking. These practices may help you process your daily readings, so the scriptures stick to your mind better. But they are completely optional—the important thing is that you read!

Will you begin reading just one chapter per day in the book of John? Try it out and see what God will do.

Don't give up!

It's going to be okay.

What if I don't have a Bible?

If you don't have a Bible, you can read for free on Bible.com or on the YouVersion Bible app. They provide the Bible in more than 1,200 languages! You can read in the language that's most familiar to you.

I'm a busy person. Is it really necessary to read the Bible?

> ***"Each day, when I pick up this book, God is speaking to me.*** *Sometimes I just gain some truth and wisdom, and other times a verse jumps out and God actually speaks to me in that moment.* ***The Bible is so important to me because God speaks to me through it."***
>
> —Wendy Palau

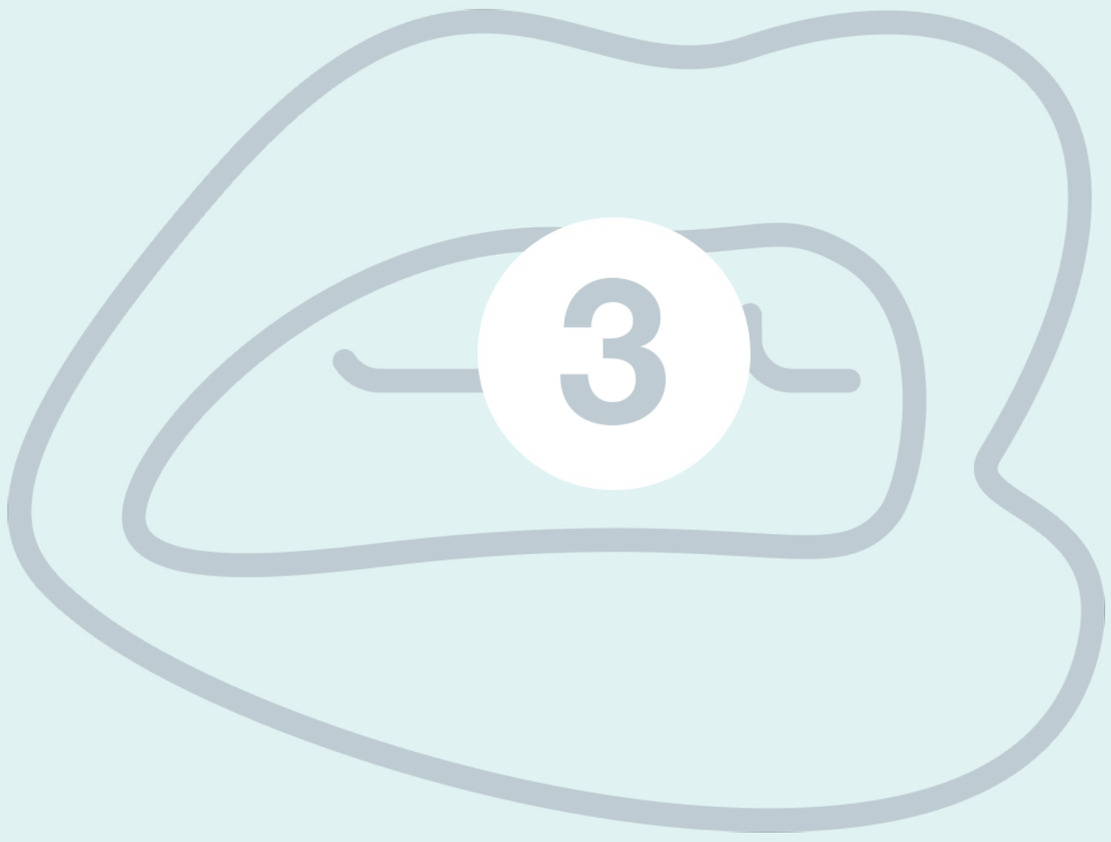
We understand that life is busy. If you're feeling overwhelmed, start small. Reading one chapter per day of the book of John. Every verse you read has meaning and power. **As you immerse yourself in the Bible, you will grow in your understanding and appreciation of God's great love for you.** Now that's worth getting excited about!

What if my life doesn't seem to be changing?

You *have* been made new through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. His love has captured your heart and your daily life will now begin to show that you have decided to follow Him. **You cannot encounter the Word of Life and remain the same.** You can and will enjoy the reality of walking in the forgiveness, joy, peace, and hope that results in a thriving relationship with God, through Jesus.

Relationships take time, and big changes take time. Think about a caterpillar inside a cocoon, being slowly changed into a butterfly. This is a process that can't be rushed, and even in the waiting time—inside the cocoon—good things are happening! Trust God's process, as He gently and patiently works in your life through His Word.

There are probably subtle changes happening in you right now, even if you can't see them yet. If you read with an open heart, we believe you are going to fall more in love with Jesus. You are going to know that God is good, and knowing that God is good changes everything! One day at a time, the power of God's Word will work in you, and your life will be transformed.



Talk to God—prayer.

> "***When I pray, I experience a beautiful exchange.*** *I come to Him with my burden, I come to him with my request, I come to him with my fear or anxiety or worry, or challenge. And I give it to Him. And an exchange happens, where He takes it and gives me peace and hope.*"
>
> —Wendy Palau

Celebrate!

One of the most wonderful gifts of being made new in Christ is that **you have access to God in prayer.** Prayer is one of the primary ways you can build your relationship with the Lord. You can experience God's presence each and every day. **Every spiritual resource of Heaven is now available to you when you ask.**

Communicating with your friends and family is a big part of what keeps your relationships flowing. The same is true with God! Prayer is a chance to communicate with Him. When we pray, we not only tell God what we need—we also worship Him, thank Him, and ask for His care and blessing for others. We can bring all our struggles, surrendering them into His faithful hands.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

HEBREWS 4:15-16 ESV

Put simply, prayer is talking with God and listening to Him. Sometimes, prayer can even be sitting with God in silence, just being together with Him.

In this chapter, we will focus on individual prayer between you and God, but the Bible also talks about praying together with other believers. God's presence arrives in a unique way when believers gather together to worship and pray. We can encourage and inspire one another's faith when we pray together.

> *And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*
>
> **ACTS 4:31 NKJV**

Prayer changes us!

It makes us more like God and unleashes God's power upon the impossible circumstances of our lives. It relieves our souls of burdens we can't carry on our own. It develops our friendship with our Creator. Just like physical exercise strengthens your physical body, the spiritual exercise of prayer strengthens your spirit and your relationship with God. Like muscles growing stronger with regular use, prayer gets easier and more enjoyable the more you do it!

Pray today...

as you learn to communicate with God.

GOD,

I need You. Thank You for rescuing me. I long to constantly be aware of Your presence. I invite You to move in every area of my life. Lead me into a flourishing and intimate relationship with you. Guide me into a vibrant and life-giving habit of daily prayer. Will You bring to mind anything in my life that might be hindering me from coming to You in prayer? Heal any broken mindset in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Five simple truths to transform you.

Have you ever seen a sunset reflected on water? Just like that sparkling reflection, when you worship God, you begin to shine with His same light. Whenever you delight in Him, He's present, transforming you into His

own image. He's right there, working His freedom into your life.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:17–18 NET

He's worthy of all your praise not only because of what He has done for you, but because of who He is. When you pray, worship God by telling Him how wonderful He is. Tell Him you love Him. Praise Him for the beautiful facets of His character we read about in Scripture. For all eternity, we can wonder at His goodness through worship.

And they sang in a mighty chorus: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered—to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing."

REVELATION 5:12 NLT

You can't help but reflect God more when you turn to Him and witness His greatness. You can stand before Him in awe of His power or in quiet and intimate acknowledgement of His presence. When you

worship Him, He is with you in a powerful way. He's filling you with His grace. He is lighting you with His light—from the inside. Grow in your relationship with Him as You praise who He is to you—Father, Creator, Savior, Provider—just to name a few!

What do you think?

What aspect of God's character do you want to delight in today?

What are you worried about today? God doesn't promise us an easy life, but He does promise to be our help and support! He doesn't want the weight of worry and stress to crush you. Thank God for what He's done and what He's doing—He will bring you peace. **God wants to give you peace so deep that it doesn't even make sense.** Thank Him for His goodness. Even if you feel like you have no good 'things' in your life—*if you have Christ, you have something wonderful beyond anything you could imagine.*

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 NLT

Bring all your concerns to Him. When you take your problems to God in prayer, you're inviting him to carry your burdens. He is the only One powerful enough to carry this heavy load and give you true rest. **He's at work in your life! He hears you. He cares for you. He wants the best for you.**

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

MATTHEW 11:28–30 MSG

What do you think?

What can you thank God for today? What concerns would you like to bring Him?

What's going to happen tomorrow? There's no way for us to know, and that's a little scary! But, you can be sure that God knows.

> *"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."*
>
> **JEREMIAH 29:11 NLT**

He has a good plan for your life. You are in His capable hands, so your future is filled with hope! Even though

this world is often dark and confusing, God tells us to pray for His will to be done in our lives, just as in Heaven. He wants You to ask for His perfect plans to become your reality—and He's faithful to answer.

When His disciples asked him how to pray, Jesus gave them an example. You can follow that same example!

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

MATTHEW 6:9-13 NIV

All the power, love, and beauty of God's heavenly kingdom is seeping into this sin-stained, broken world. His Kingdom is at work, undoing evil every day. He's leading us toward our original created purpose—to be loved by Him, to love Him, and to love others. When we pray, we can taste His goodness right here in the land of the living. God's will is for you to participate in bringing His great love into the world, and it starts with speaking to him in prayer.

What do you think?

How does it feel to know God has a plan for your life?

Have you ever been too embarrassed to ask for help? Admitting our weakness to people can be hard, but it doesn't have to be that way with God. Jesus experienced all the same struggles you do and knows just how you feel.

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. So then, since we have a great

High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

HEBREWS 4:13-16 NLT

Every temptation, every challenge, every grief—He has felt it. He is truly the perfect savior for us humans because He lived as an actual human! He is infinitely generous with His outpouring grace and forgiveness. You never have to be afraid to come before Jesus when you need help. You can run into His open arms—just like a child runs to a loving parent—knowing He will receive you with compassion. Remember that God can handle your frustration and pain, as well as receive your thanks, since He faced all the same trials we do.

Even though God is infinitely wise, He wants to get to know YOU through a genuine relationship. **He wants you to come and talk with Him. You can talk to God about anything and everything!** Go to God boldly, and find the forgiveness and the grace you need. He is the one who can give it. Go and receive the mercy which is yours in Christ!

What do you think?

Can you think of anything you've been embarrassed to talk about with God?

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will

your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

MATTHEW 7:7-11 NIV

God is the best father! He loves caring for us. He is delighted when we look to him to fill all our needs. Whenever you are in trouble, afraid, or lacking anything, call on the only One who has the desire and the power to help you. He is the One who is willing and able to provide for us!

This doesn't mean we can ask God for anything we want and expect to get it instantly. After all, if we got what we wanted all the time, we would probably end up destroying ourselves. A good father doesn't spoil his children with excess. He doesn't give his children inappropriate power and responsibility. He doesn't allow them to boss Him around as though He were the child, and they the parent. If He doesn't answer our prayer in the way or timing we want, we can trust that He has something better in mind. We can ask Him for what we need, and trust that He will respond to us with the best care—His abundance of love, power, and generosity. **He hears and answers our prayers faithfully. Ask for what you need today.**

What do you think?

What needs will you talk to God about today?

TODAY:

Pray for 5 minutes.

In healthy relationships, people communicate in small ways throughout the day but also make time for an intentional, focused connection. Prayer is no different! Consider starting and ending your day with a few dedicated moments of focused prayer. Set aside the distractions and noise of the day to simply talk to your Heavenly Father.

What do I say to the God of the universe?

Prayer can feel awkward at first, but feels more natural as you spend more time with God—just like in your other relationships. You can tell God anything.

We can be completely honest with God. James, the brother of Jesus, tells us that:

> *"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."*
>
> **JAMES 5:16 NLT**

Don't feel pressured to fill up your prayer time with words. Leave time for silence, and learn to listen for God's response. Keep it simple. **There is not a magic formula to follow.**

Here are some ideas to start the conversation:

Thank Him for the good things in life, and celebrate His faithfulness:

God, thank You for blessing me by _____.

Jesus, You loved me so well when _____.

Father, You amazed me with your care by _____.

Tell him honestly when you're upset, and bring him all your needs:

Lord, I don't understand why _____.

God, I'm crying out for You to change: _____.

Holy Spirit, I need You. Please help by _____.

Ask Him to guide and direct your life:

Lord, would You show me what to do about _____?

God, help me understand Your will about _____.

Jesus, teach me how to act like You in this situation: _____.

Ask for what you need:

God, I need You to provide for my finances by _____.

Lord, I have this problem in my family: _____. *Will You to help solve it?*

Jesus, bring Your healing to my friend _____ who is sick.

Ask for forgiveness:

Lord, I confess I have been unloving today by _____.

God, I really messed up. Forgive me and help me to turn toward You.

Holy Spirit, my mind has twisted the truth. Forgive me and untwist me.

Ask for protection:

God, shield me from the evil one who is tempting me.

Lord, protect my loved ones from danger.

Holy Spirit, I feel attacked. Fight for me and be my strength.

Keep it simple—just talk to God.

Don't over-complicate your prayer time. It's simply conversing with God—anywhere, in any physical posture—sitting, standing, laying down, walking. Be authentic. **It's two-way—you speak to Him and He speaks to you.**

Prayer is both an invitation from God and a command of God. He invites us to bring our needs and requests to Him. **The Bible puts it this way:**

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you."

1 PETER 5:7 (NLT)

The Word tells us that we should pray continually:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16–18 NIV

Pray without ceasing?! Sounds impossible! But it doesn't mean that you spend 24 hours of the day on your knees. Just honestly speak with Him throughout your day. Pray as though He is sharing life with you, because He truly is.

Will you spend five minutes praying today? Try it out and see what God will do.

Don't give up!

It's going to be okay.

Don't let anything stop you from coming to God in prayer. He longs to hear from you, and you need to hear from Him. You have nothing to lose!

Is something stopping you?

I want to pray, but I'm just too busy. Just talk to God—in your car, while you do the dishes, or start by setting aside a few minutes first thing in the morning.

I can't think of what to say—I'm not good with words! Remember that prayer is a time you can come before the Lord in all your weakness. You are not being graded on how great your prayer sounds. The important thing is just to start.

I don't have a private place to pray. You don't need a special place to pray—pray wherever you are! Finding a quiet place might make it easier to focus your attention on God, but that's not always possible. Many times we need to pray in the midst of life's chaos or a stressful emergency. Over time, it will become a habit.

There's something I'm not ready to talk about with God.

> *Prayer is about facing God—not turning away from Him—but turning toward Him.*
> —Wendy Palau

We know that God sees every part of us. There is truly nothing we can hide from Him, but it can be intimidating to turn to Him in prayer. *Intimacy can bring up some emotions.* If there's something you aren't ready to talk about with Him—a painful subject from your past, or a sin you know you'll need to deal with—be encouraged that **God can be trusted to deal gently and mercifully with you.**

> *"He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. Finally he will cause justice to be victorious. And his name will be the hope of all the world."*
> **MATTHEW 12:20–21 NLT**

When we first come to Jesus, we have a mountain of sin left behind us. Usually it still partially affects us even though it's no longer our identity. **God will not confront you with all your sin at once. He is so gracious and patient—that's why our transformation is a day by day, life-long process.** Ask God to help you pray through one thing at a time. Start with something that's not too overwhelming. See where He will lovingly lead you.

I feel like God might be mad at me—what I say won't matter to Him.

You matter to God—a whole lot! Everything that causes you anxiety matters to Him. You are His beloved child, and He delights in showing you mercy. He wants to talk with you—yes, even you. Persist in prayer. God desires a vibrant relationship with you. Talk with Him today and be empowered by His Holy Spirit to live in joy and victory.

Read this passage to be encouraged:

The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.

PSALM 103:8-13 NLT

Cleanse your heart—forgiveness.

> *You accepted His offer.* ***You asked Him to forgive you—now you get to believe that He's done it.*** *And what a joy that is!*
> —Andrew Palau

Celebrate!

Guess what? God does not expect that you will never sin again. He understands you will. All-knowing, yet abounding in mercy, God understands the brokenness of our humanity. But He does not leave us alone in our wretchedness. **He lavishes us with mercy and empowers us to live in holiness.**

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

ROMANS 8:1-2

You are made clean by the blood of Jesus.

When Jesus took our place on the cross, He paid the price—death—for all the sins of our past, present, and future. We are completely washed clean in the sight of God. Our righteousness does not come from our own obedience and perfection but from Jesus' perfection.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 NKJV

Not only did Jesus take away all the guilt of our sin, He made a divine trade. When you handed over your old life, ruled by sin and death, He took it from you and gave you His perfect life in exchange. Jesus' perfection, holiness, righteousness, and purity now cover you. When God looks on you, He sees you as spotless. This is the amazing mystery of the Gospel.

What is sin and why is it bad?

Simply put, sin is 'missing the mark,' or falling short of God's perfect design for His creation. Let's be honest—a lot of what we do misses the mark. If we don't deal with it, sin leads to more sin. Shame causes us to retreat from the Father who loves us. Our sin can hurt the people we love, cause us to feel distant from God, and lead to bad decisions and suffering. Some sins are hard to miss; things like adultery, theft, and violence. But more often our sins are subtle like attitudes of the heart, hateful thoughts, internal lust, pride, and selfishness.

> *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.*
>
> **1 JOHN 3:9 ESV**

This verse is not saying that we will never sin again—we will! It means that because God cares so deeply for us, **He will not allow us to continue destroying**

ourselves and those around us. Habitual, blatant patterns of sin need to come to an end. He will help us end them. He won't allow us to continue our old ways which poisoned our lives. This is a very good thing! This is how God takes care of us.

Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sins are put out of sight.
Yes, what joy for those
whose record the Lord has cleared of sin.

ROMANS 4:7-8 NLT

That means you! You've accepted His forgiveness and your record is clear. **Because of what Jesus did, you are forgiven once and for all. What a reason to rejoice!**

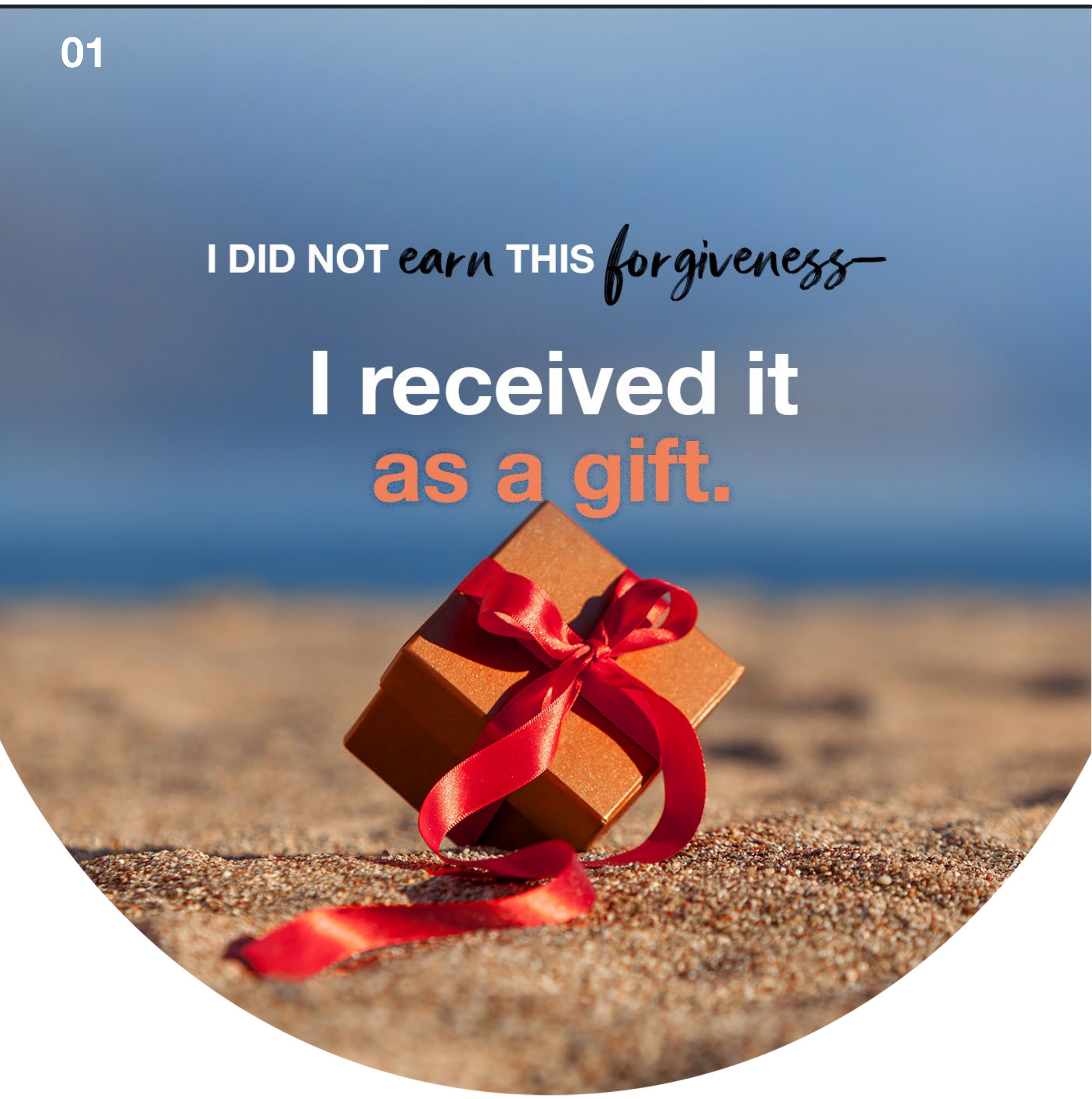
Pray today...

as you come to understand God's redemption.

GRACIOUS AND LOVING SAVIOR,

I confess that sin has impacted my life. I have felt so ashamed and worthless. Thank You that You have graciously paid the debt for my sin, freed me from guilt, and made me clean. Help me to walk in freedom and mercy, receiving Your forgiveness, and forgiving others as I grow. In Jesus' name, amen.

Five simple truths to transform you.



> *He doesn't just accept your apology. He is the only one who can actually clear your record of sin.*
> —Andrew Palau

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in His grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

ROMANS 3:23-24 NLT

No one is perfect—not one single person! God didn't save you because you were good. God chose you to be reborn into His family while you were still a sinner because He loved you before you loved Him. Even though you've been made new, you'll never be able to live as purely as Jesus lived. No one can. But God in His great mercy has made you completely right through Christ's rightness, not your own. In Christ you are completely clean and alive!

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

EPHESIANS 2:4-6 NIV

Your identity before God and others is changed because of what Jesus has done for you. When you believed the Gospel, God freed you from the power of sin and guilt—lavishing on you, holiness and every good thing

you did not deserve. **He does this by grace and through faith.**

> *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
>
> **EPHESIANS 2:8-10 ESV**

When you sin, come to God in repentance. Remember, just because you sin, it does not mean that you are no longer a Christian or no longer a child of God. Far from it, friend! He sees you through the blood of Jesus. God has given you the gift of a new life, and He will not change His mind and take that gift back. Rejoice in your new identity today. ***God says you are clean in Christ Jesus. You are truly clean!***

What do you think?

Can you picture what you might look like to God?

02

Jesus is fully God and He is also fully human. He's no stranger to the brokenness of the world because He lived in it! And yet, He never sinned. He went through all the same temptations and struggles we face, yet He remained holy. Since He has encountered and overcome every type of human trouble, He is compassionate toward the trials you face, and He is able to help you overcome them.

This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

HEBREWS 4:15 NLT

God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. ***And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation.*** *So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.*

HEBREWS 2:10-11 NLT

Does it seem strange that this verse talks about Jesus being made perfect? Maybe you're thinking, "wait, wasn't Jesus already perfect? How could He be ***made perfect?***" Well, you're right! This passage isn't talking about Jesus becoming more perfect. It's talking about how Jesus became ***the Savior that is just right for us***. It was through His suffering and trials on the earth that Jesus identified with our human experience in the broken world. He went through all these things for the purpose of being able to save and help us through every human weakness we encounter. Now He calls us brothers and sisters, right in the middle of our challenges and troubles. He gets it!

Even the Apostle Paul—the man who wrote so much of the New Testament—struggled with sin. Here's what he said:

> *I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate.*
>
> **ROMANS 7:15**

Jesus knows better than anyone—**we can only experience victory from sin with His help.**

When Jesus died on the cross, death could not hold Him. He was perfectly innocent, so death had no rightful claim on Him! He came back to life because **the power of His holiness and rightness overwhelmed the grave.** The power of Christ's resurrected life is now working within you! **Because Jesus overcame sin and death, He has the power to help us overcome sin and death in our lives.**

What do you think?

Is there a struggle in your life that no one understands? Jesus understands it. Talk it over with Him.

03

I AM *set free* FROM *the power of sin.*

I can obey God.

> *Imagine yourself in the court of law—there's a long list of everything you've ever done that's hurt others, that doesn't measure up to God's standard of goodness.* ***We are guilty. But then Jesus steps in. He gives His life in your place—taking the punishment for everything you've ever done wrong.***
>
> —Andrew Palau

Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

ROMANS 6:15-16 NLT

You have been set free! Christ's sacrifice broke the power of sin in your life. With Jesus as your King, you've been empowered to make godly choices. Obeying his commands isn't an attempt to earn God's love. You already have ALL His love! Obedience is an offering you can choose to give God out of the love of your heart. Being free in Christ doesn't mean you're free to do whatever you want. Being free means you are free to give God all parts of your life. You are no longer bound by sin's enslaving power.

Sin is a cruel master that robs us of power and leaves us weak and desperate. God is a gracious, tender, and loving Father who empowers and strengthens us to choose rightly. Though He is sovereign and all powerful, He will not manipulate or control you into serving Him. God gives you choice so that when you choose to obey Him, it is an act of love as well as obedience.

> *He is faithful and able to gently show you when you're getting off track. And He is faithful and able to forgive you.*
> —Andrew Palau

What do you think?

What will look different in your life now that you have been set free from sin's power?

Jesus did what we could not do! He lived a human life without ever giving in to temptation. All people will fall short of the example Jesus set, but when we are weak and rely on the incredible strength of Jesus' death-breaking, soul-saving, innocent blood, then Christ—the greatest power in the world—is at work in us. Even our weakness, when filled up with God's strength, becomes strong!

"...My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 NLT

Just as one of the poets in the Bible realizes that **no darkness is dark enough to outdo the brightness of God's light,** let us remember that even in our weakest moments, God's strength will carry us. Nothing in the universe is more powerful than Him. Our fleshly weakness will never be so deep that the strength of God can't undo it! He graces us so generously with the unearned gift of Himself. His grace is all we need.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.

PSALM 139:11-12 ESV

What do you think?

Is there an area of your life where you feel weak? Ask for grace and strength from God in this area.

...forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation.

LUKE 11:4 NLT

Our debt has been paid in full by the blood of Jesus. When you put your trust in Jesus, Christ's righteousness became yours. All records of your sin were erased. He is faithful to forgive, no matter how big or small the sin. Since our debt of sin is forgiven, we can also love

others well. We can become quick to forgive. God's grace covers us and we can extend it to those around us. But...it's pretty easy to make excuses to not forgive others.

You might find yourself thinking...

"Well, this person didn't apologize to me, so why should I forgive them?!"

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. **ROMANS 5:8 NLT**

We certainly didn't apologize to Jesus before He decided to die in our place on the cross. Do we have the right to set conditions for others to earn our forgiveness?

"But this person has let me down so many times. Why should I keep forgiving?"

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times." **MATTHEW 18:21-22 NLT**

God forgives us over and over, and He wants us to do the same for others. This doesn't mean that you need to trust someone when you know they'll probably hurt you again. But it does mean you need to forgive them.

“This person did something so awful, they don’t deserve my forgiveness.”

Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. **LUKE 6:35 NLT**

We understand how hard it can be to forgive. It sometimes feels impossible. When someone has deeply wounded you, it is true that they don’t deserve your forgiveness! But, neither did we—Jesus acquired forgiveness for us.

“I simply cannot make myself forgive.”

Maybe you have suffered abuse, trauma, or deep pain inflicted by a certain person. If something like this happened to you, we are so sorry. You experienced a profound evil and nothing about that is okay. God is grieving with you and wants to free you from harboring hatred that will further damage your heart. Ask Him to help you little by little to heal from past wounds. Forgiving can be a part of that healing process and it can take many years. Trust that God will care for you tenderly in the process.

Like all works of grace, forgiving others is not something we can do by our own strength. We need God's presence and power to help us. He makes the impossible possible.

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

PSALM 34:17-18 ESV

What do you think?

Is there someone you can forgive today?

TODAY:

Practice repentance

(we promise, it's not as scary as it sounds).

Have you ever heard the word, "repentance?" It may call to mind images of kneeling on the ground and begging for forgiveness—or visions of an angry, shaking finger scolding you for "being bad."

Repentance doesn't have to be any of these things. Our forgiveness has already been purchased by Christ—we don't have to beg for it! God doesn't see us as naughty children who need to be punished because Christ has taken the punishment for us. Now we are covered in His righteousness! We can come boldly before God's throne of grace.

Turning to Christ.

Repentance is turning away from where we have been going (in the wrong direction)—and going a better way (Christ's way). Even though we are not enslaved by sin, our old nature tends to lead us astray. *We must ask God to forgive us, and turn us back in the right direction again and again throughout our lives.* But we can do this with confidence! We know that our loving Father in heaven wants us near Him. He longs for us to have all the benefits of knowing Him—like freedom from guilt and spiritual thriving. **Let's repent regularly—it's a healthy and positive part of Christian life.**

Repentance helps us!

It helps us walk in the freedom Christ has already purchased for us. It helps us remember our weakness, and how much we need God's help in life. It helps us understand the wonderful sacrifice Jesus made when He took the punishment for our sins—death on the cross—and made us right with God. Repentance even

helps us to forgive ourselves, and to forgive others as Christ forgave us.

Start this habit for freedom.

At the end of each day, you can ask God to show you where you have sinned. You can ask for His forgiveness—for a fresh start in the morning. Decide to turn Christward in that area. Remember that change takes time, and you'll need God's help every day. His grace is unending! If you mess up, don't wait around feeling bad about it. Repent right away and keep your eyes on Jesus.

Will you start a habit of repenting today? Try it out and see what God will do!

Don't give up!
It's going to be okay.

Am I really forgiven?

> *You are His child. Your heart is clean and made new! Day by day, you can trust Him to help you to walk in the light.*
> —Andrew Palau

Has your mind ever buzzed with negative thoughts like these?

I am not worthy to become a child of God.

My life is messed up and there is no way that God would accept me.

I am doomed to live in shame forever.

Heaven would never welcome a sinner like me.

I need to fix my life up before I can come to God.

These are all lies! You've been made new by Christ but **there is an accuser that wants to trap you in guilt and condemnation.** It's so important that you

understand all that Christ has done to secure total freedom and forgiveness for you. The work of the cross has made you ***completely clean!*** God pardons ***all of our sin*** because Jesus took the punishment for ***all sin*** when He died on the cross on our behalf. Your forgiveness does not depend on your feelings but rather on what Christ has done. God is faithful to FORGIVE you and FREE you from the power of sin!

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:9 ESV

God will not withhold His forgiveness or love from you. No matter what you have done, God does not change. He is a ***faithful and loving Father***—and you are ***His beloved child!*** The Bible illustrates this truth in the Parable of the Lost Son. If you're having a hard time receiving or believing that God has forgiven you, read the whole story for yourself in Luke, chapter 15. In this story, a reckless son asks his dad to give him his inheritance early. He leaves home and spends all his money quickly with wild living. When he gets so desperate that he's starving, he decides to come back and ask for a job as a servant in his father's house. Here is how his dad responds, and this is also how God responds to us when we repent and turn back toward Him.

But his father said to the servants, "Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found." So the party began.

LUKE 15:22–24 NLT

Friend, when you repent, God does not accept your apology reluctantly. He doesn't give away your place at the family table. He celebrates your return with open arms. He throws a party to welcome you home. ***Run to Him!***

Receive power to live in purpose—Holy Spirit.

> *The truth we are talking about today is mind-boggling. We keep saying: you are not alone. Well, the reason you are not alone is because when you accepted Christ, the Holy Spirit made His home IN you. He is the person of God that is with you always.*
>
> —Andrew Palau

Celebrate!

God's Spirit lives in you!

God's Spirit dwells within us, transforming our passions and filling us with His power to live out God's purposes! He leads you, helps you, strengthens you, comforts you, and produces ***the best kind of fruit in your life***. Jesus said He would ask the Father to send us an Advocate, a Helper—the Holy Spirit. The word 'Spirit' in the Gospels is the Greek word 'Pneuma,' like breath or wind. **He is like the very breath of our lungs, bringing oxygen and life to every part of our being.**

> *It's the Holy Spirit that speaks to us as we pray and read the Bible. It's the Holy Spirit who convicts us when we're doing wrong. It's the Holy Spirit who fills us with hope and love and joy and peace—even when life is hard. What a gift for God to be with us in this way! You are not alone. Not an orphan. You have a Helper.*
> —Wendy Palau

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But

you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you.

JOHN 14:16-17 NLT

Ready for a short history lesson?

Then—In the Old Testament, before Jesus walked the earth, God's presence and power were experienced through a place (the Tabernacle, then the Temple) and an object (the Ark of the Covenant). Throughout history, it was important for God's people to know that God dwelt among them and that His presence and power defined every aspect of their lives. Only the High Priest could enter God's dwelling place—the Holy of Holies—to offer sacrifices.

Much like God was present with His people as they wandered through the desert wasteland hoping to enter into the promised land, Christ took up residence among humanity during His earthly life. ***Jesus dwelt with us***—He was fully God and fully human! He was the substitutionary offering once and for all that led to our freedom. The Gospel of John say of Jesus:

*"The Word became flesh and made **his dwelling** among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

JOHN 1:14

Now—When you accepted Jesus, God's Holy Spirit came to dwell within you! He is present amidst the brokenness, difficulty, and crisis as we eagerly wait for what is to come in Heaven. Jesus said it was one of the reasons He died—so that His presence, the Holy Spirit, would come live in you.

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

JOHN 16:7 ESV

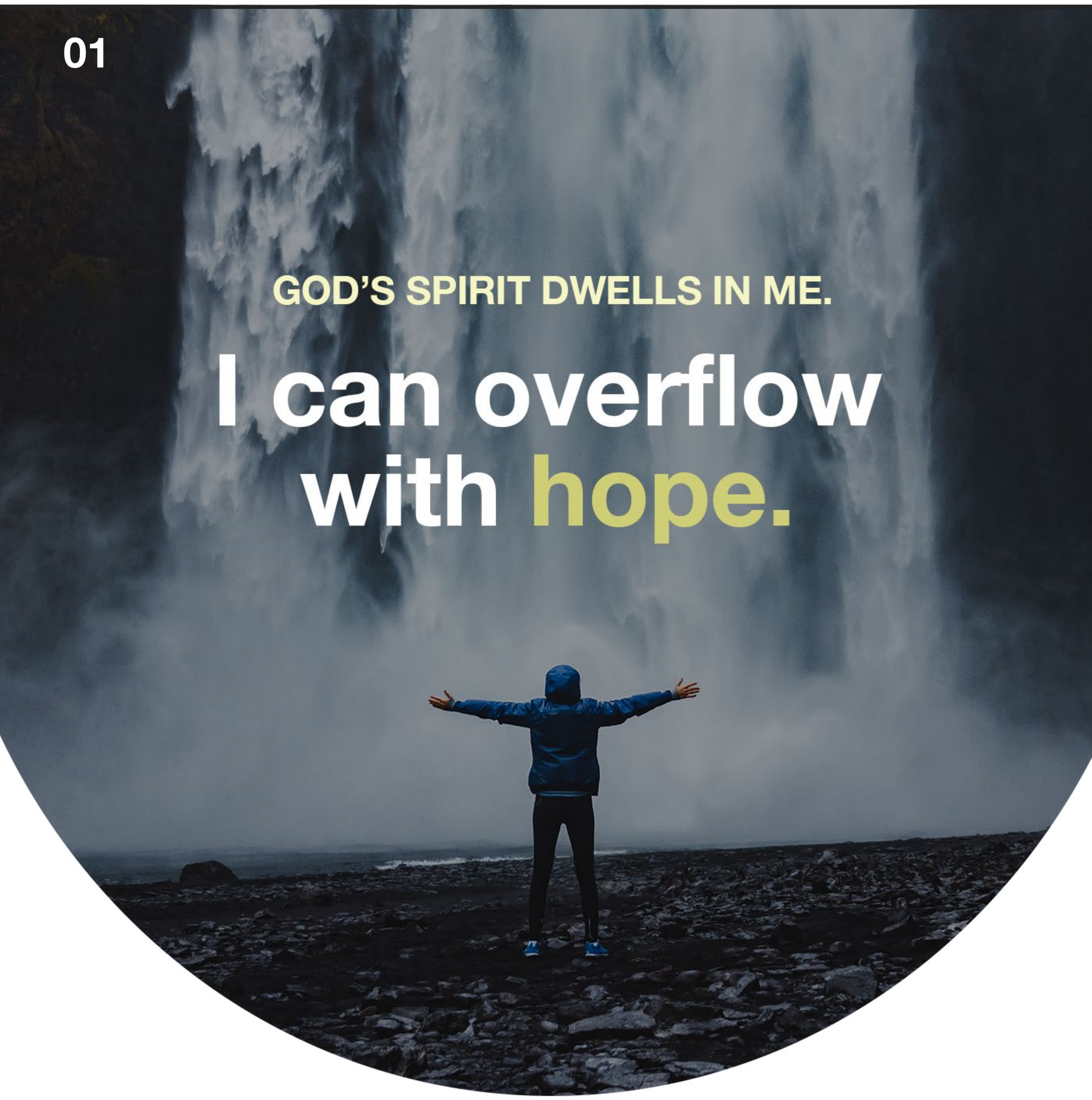
Pray today...

as you learn how the Holy Spirit works in you.

LORD,

I want to produce the right kind of fruit in my life. Thank You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit who helps me, fills me, guides my every step, and never leaves me. Make me attentive to Your every prompting, and help me reflect Your nature to those around me.

Five simple truths to transform you.



The Holy Spirit isn't just a friend who hangs out inside us—He is the Spirit of God, changing us from the inside out. He's always working on us, planting and watering seeds of joy and peace, to grow an abundant garden

of hope. As the Spirit teaches us to expect goodness from our faithful God, we will begin to overflow with confident hope!

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13 NLT

You might be thinking, I sure don't feel like I'm overflowing with hope. And that's okay. Maybe you feel like life is a constant struggle. Hope doesn't come from the difficult parts of life going away. Sure, we'd love for our lives to be easier, and we can pray for that! But the Holy Spirit brings a kind of hope that doesn't depend on life's circumstances. We can possess His hope even when we don't "feel" it.

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13 NIV

God invites us to look beyond the “things” in our lives to see Him—ever-present and powerful God! When we focus more on Him than on our struggles, our abilities, or our lack, we possess the confident hope of the Holy Spirit. Let’s put our hope in Him!

What do you think?

Is there one particular struggle which is blocking your view of God and needs to be seen in the light of hope?

GOD'S SPIRIT WORKS WITHIN ME.

I have power to do what pleases Him.

You are being transformed day by day. In your old life, you had no real ability of your own to please God. But now, you're free from the binding power of sin! The Holy Spirit dwells in you, guiding you into a closer relationship with God. You can want what God wants because He lives in you. You have been given a new power—the power to do what brings God joy!

For it is God who is working in you, both to desire and to act for his good pleasure. Do all things without complaining or arguing, that

you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13-15 ESV

God is pleased when we do things differently—more lovingly—than the world. This makes us stand apart from the crowd, like lights in a dark place. God wants to make you the vessel through which He shows His love to hurting people. We couldn't do this before, but with God's Spirit empowering us, we can!

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1–2 NIV

God's love within us makes us stand out from the world. In the Bible, when asked which of the commandments were most important, Jesus answered this way:

"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.

MARK 12:30-31 NIV

This might seem simple, but it's actually very difficult—loving people is hard! The Holy Spirit is actively working, empowering us to please God by loving God and loving people in a humble, Christ-like way. This is a type of love that affects everything we do and say—our whole lives!

What do you think?

How do you think the Holy Spirit is empowering your desires and actions, so you can shine with love in the world?

God has a purpose for your life. But without His help, you won't get very far. Because God's Spirit abides in you, you are a branch that can grow heavy with fruit. You can't nourish yourself. Everything you need flows from Him, from the vine to a branch. Because you're connected to the life source, God Himself, you can live out God's beautiful purpose for your life!

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain

in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

JOHN 15:4-5 NIV

In the passage above, Jesus is describing Himself as the source of life. The Holy Spirit is your pathway of connection to Jesus. Just like a small branch connected to a larger rooted vine, you **get your spiritual nourishment from God through the delivery system of the Spirit.** Think for a moment about the life you had before you came to Christ. In your old life, you were subject to the workings of sin and death, which were keeping you separated from God. You, the little branch, were cut off from the vine. When a branch is cut from a plant, no matter how much you care for, water, trim, and feed that branch, it won't be able to grow or bear fruit. It will eventually wither and fail—it's unable to get water and nutrients from the main stem which is rooted into the ground. That little branch won't survive, let alone thrive enough to bear fruit!

In the book of Galatians, Paul explains that living in the Spirit and living in the world are two different things.

The products of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord,

jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

GALATIANS 5:19-21 NIV

But he goes on to describe how living by the Spirit gives us something better! When you're filled with the Spirit, you're connected to the life-source. You're supported by His trustworthy care, feeding, and influence. You're watered by His life-giving presence. You'll be nourished. You'll bloom. **You'll be empowered to bear fruit! You are enabled by the Holy Spirit to recover God's fruitful purposes for your life.**

What do you think?

What is one way you have felt nourished by the Holy Spirit this week?

When we are connected to God through the Holy Spirit, wonderful fruit grows out of our lives:

> *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives:* ***love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*** *There is no law against these things!*
>
> **GALATIANS 5:22-23 NLT**

These fruits aren't just about changing our behavior

to appear more godly. Rather, they are the evidence that who we are—at the core—is being changed deep within by the Spirit of God. God, the life-source that feeds you, will cause you to bear godly fruit! This fruit will be evident in every aspect of your life, especially your relationships with God and people. They are the gifts that grow as a result of God restoring us to our original purpose.

But what does that mean? **What was God's original purpose for humanity, way back before sin entered the world?** How did He want humans to live? Sin is so much a part of our human experience that it's hard to even imagine what life would be like without it. Let's try to understand this more by taking a look at the beginning of all things in the book of Genesis.

Faithfulness

God wants us to thrive and care for our world.

> *God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."*
>
> **GENESIS 1:28 MSG**

By the Spirit, we can be reliable and committed caretakers of the many blessings God has entrusted to us.

Joy, Kindness

God wants us to receive His provision.

And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food."

GENESIS 1:29 ESV

By the Spirit, we can be kind and generous with others as we joyfully receive from God, our provider. Just as God provided all the food needed for Adam and Eve, He wants us to look to Him as provider, and not worry or fear that we will be left destitute.

Goodness

God wants us to be workers who create beauty in the world.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

GENESIS 2:15 ESV

By the Spirit, we add goodness to the world. Every time we work to create something beautiful or that blesses others, we bring small glimpses of God into the world.

Self-control

God wants us to live within His boundaries for our freedom, safety, and well-being.

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

GENESIS 2:16-17 NIV

By the Spirit we can live within God's boundaries for us. God knows that we don't thrive when we do whatever we want with no limits. He wants us to have self-control and follow His beneficial commands.

Love

God wants us to be in community with others.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him."

GENESIS 2:18 NLT

By the Spirit, we can strengthen and build one another up through the bond of fellowship in genuine love.

Gentleness and Patience

God gives us the responsibility of caring for, not harming each other.

Afterward the Lord asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?"
"I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?"
But the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!"

GENESIS 4:9–10 NLT

By the Spirit, we can bear up when provoked by people we find difficult. God is everlastingly patient with us. We can serve others humbly, not thinking ourselves more important than the rest. We are all brothers and sisters, tasked with looking out for each other.

All of the above!

God wants us to be His faithful image-bearers.

So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

GENESIS 1:27 NKJV

By the Spirit, we can embody all the fruits of the Spirit so that we can faithfully represent His character on the earth.

Growth and flourishing happen in your life when you are filled with the Holy Spirit's restoring presence! **God is gradually undoing the long-term effects of sin. He's doing this through you and me—remaking the deep places of our hearts.** Lean into these redemptive benefits that come from being inhabited by the Spirit.

What do you think?

Imagine—what would your life look like if you lived in a world where sin had never existed?

Who is the ruler of your heart? You used to be ruled by sin, or your own desires, but now there's a new king in charge—Jesus! Where Christ is ruling, there is peace. If peace seems to be missing sometimes, it might be an indicator that an area of your life needs to come under Christ's rule.

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body

you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

COLOSSIANS 3:15 NLT

In Colossians, the Bible says, “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” Imagine the Holy Spirit as a referee, and the peace of Christ is like the whistle that blows when a player is out of line. When we act or even think in ways that are contrary to the nature of God, we can feel a shift in that peace—like a whistle being blown in a stadium. It’s not because He wants to punish you. It’s because He wants to help you.

Then you can come to God in prayer and say, ***“What happened? What caused me to lose my peace? God, will You show me? Was it something I said or did?”*** And it’s such a mystery, but God will show you! The Holy Spirit will help you. In this way, He leads you not just to be free from sin—but to walk in the rich plans and purposes that God has for your life.

What do you think?

Is there something in your life right now that you have no peace about? Bring it to the Lord in prayer and see what He will do.

THIS WEEK:

Live your most fruitful life.

Through the Holy Spirit, our lives can bear wonderful fruit. None of us bear this fruit perfectly. We need God's help!

In which of these areas do you feel the weakest?

Read through these statements, and notice if there's one that seems especially true for you.

Love—I'm good at loving my friends, but loving my enemies? That doesn't come easily!

Joy—Everyday stresses of life are stealing my joy.

Peace—I find myself starting arguments rather than creating harmony.

Patience—I have to admit, my ability to put up with difficult people and situations is a bit thin.

Goodness—I try to do what's right, but I find myself making bad choices.

Faithfulness—If I'm really honest, my faith feels a little shaky. I'm not sure how well I can devote myself to God and the people in my life.

Gentleness—I'm a pretty bold person—being gentle to others just doesn't come naturally to me.

Self Control—I've been struggling to master my own desires—the ones I know aren't good for me and the people I care about.

Life is hard. We need God's help.

Feeling weak in a certain area is okay and normal. This walk with God is a journey of gradual change. It takes practice, self-control, and God's help.

When you have found a statement that applies to you, will you ask God to help develop and form you in that area? This is a wonderful request to bring to the Lord in prayer. He is pleased when we offer Him our whole selves—especially the places where we are most broken.

Try it out and see what God will do!

Don't give up! It's going to be okay.

What if I don't feel God's Spirit?

God's Spirit is in you whether you "feel" Him or not. Being able to sense His presence is not something that happens all the time. But when we don't feel Him, we can trust that He is with us **because His Word says so.** We know His teachings are trustworthy—He would never lie to us.

> *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*
>
> **HEBREWS 11:1-3 NIV**

Believing would sure be a lot easier if God the Father and the Holy Spirit weren't invisible, and Jesus was still walking around on the earth! But this is where faith comes in. The whole world was formed by God, who is invisible to us, and yet the earth, the solar system, all the galaxies, and humanity's position in them—all these are very real. That's how real the Holy Spirit is,

living inside you! Though we cannot see Him and often can't feel Him, He will bear very real fruit in your life as you continue to follow His leading in faith.

Was that you, Lord?

If you think God is speaking to you about a decision in your life, but you're not sure if it's just your imagination—that's okay! It takes time to learn discernment. **Here are a few things that may help:**

Check to see if what you think He's showing you lines up with the teachings of the Bible. God never changes, so He will never tell you to act in a way that is inconsistent with His character and the commands of the Bible.

Notice if you feel peaceful about what He's telling you. If you feel a nagging sense of unease about your decision, it may not be the right choice. Bring it before the Lord in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you with His peace.

Talk to a friend or church leader who is a mature Christian and exhibits the fruit of the Spirit in their life. Tell them how you think God might be speaking to you, and try asking them, "does this seem like something God would say?" Ask your friend to pray for you about the matter.

Wait. If you're still not sure, and especially if you

are praying about a big life decision, take your time. Spend some more time praying, waiting, and reading the scriptures to see if the Lord will direct you further.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12 ESV

We might hear Him very clearly at times, guiding and directing us through the Word and through the Holy Spirit. At other times, we will make mistakes in our hearing. For that reason, it's important not to proclaim what we think we hear from the Holy Spirit as absolute truth. Only when we stand face to face with Jesus will we be able to hear Him speak to us without the interference of sin's pollution affecting our hearing. This doesn't mean you won't feel the Holy Spirit leading you. You will! It just means, like looking in a cloudy mirror, our understanding is imperfect.

Connect with God's family—the Church.

Why go to church?
"It's Jesus. We can be so broken and sad, but He is beautiful. Church is where we gather around the One who makes all things right."
—Wendy Palau

Celebrate!

You are part of God's family—His Body of believers.

You belong here in God's Church—to find purpose, to serve, to be supported, to learn, to grow in your love for Him and everyone else. And His plan is for you to live out those blessings and challenges in a community with other believers.

The word 'church' has meant different things in different cultures and throughout history.. The Bible puts it simply, ***you and I are the Church.*** We are a global ***"body" of believers***, uniting across denominations, nations, and centuries as Christ's representatives to the world. We're also a local community, meeting regularly to worship God, build each other up, and share life together!

But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you"...This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored,

all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:18–21,25-27 NLT

> *What is so beautiful to me about the Church is the grace that gets expressed as we work out what God commands of us. He commands us to serve, to give, to share the Good News, to forgive others as He forgives us. And this will not always be easy. But His grace will always be enough.*
> —Andrew Palau

Wondering what the first churches looked like?

The Bible shares a glimpse into what Church looked like for some of the earliest Christians, shortly after Jesus ascended into Heaven:

They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

ACTS 2:46-47

Do you feel the sense of joy in this description? This is what you get to be a part of! **It's where you belong.**

We share each other's joy and sorrow, because we are part of the same body. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We belong to God and we belong to each other.

5 Things the Church is NOT...

Not an institution—it is a community.

Not perfect—it is full of God's grace.

Not a building—it is made up of people.

Not a business—it is God's agent of change in the world.

Not an event—it is people on a mission with purpose.

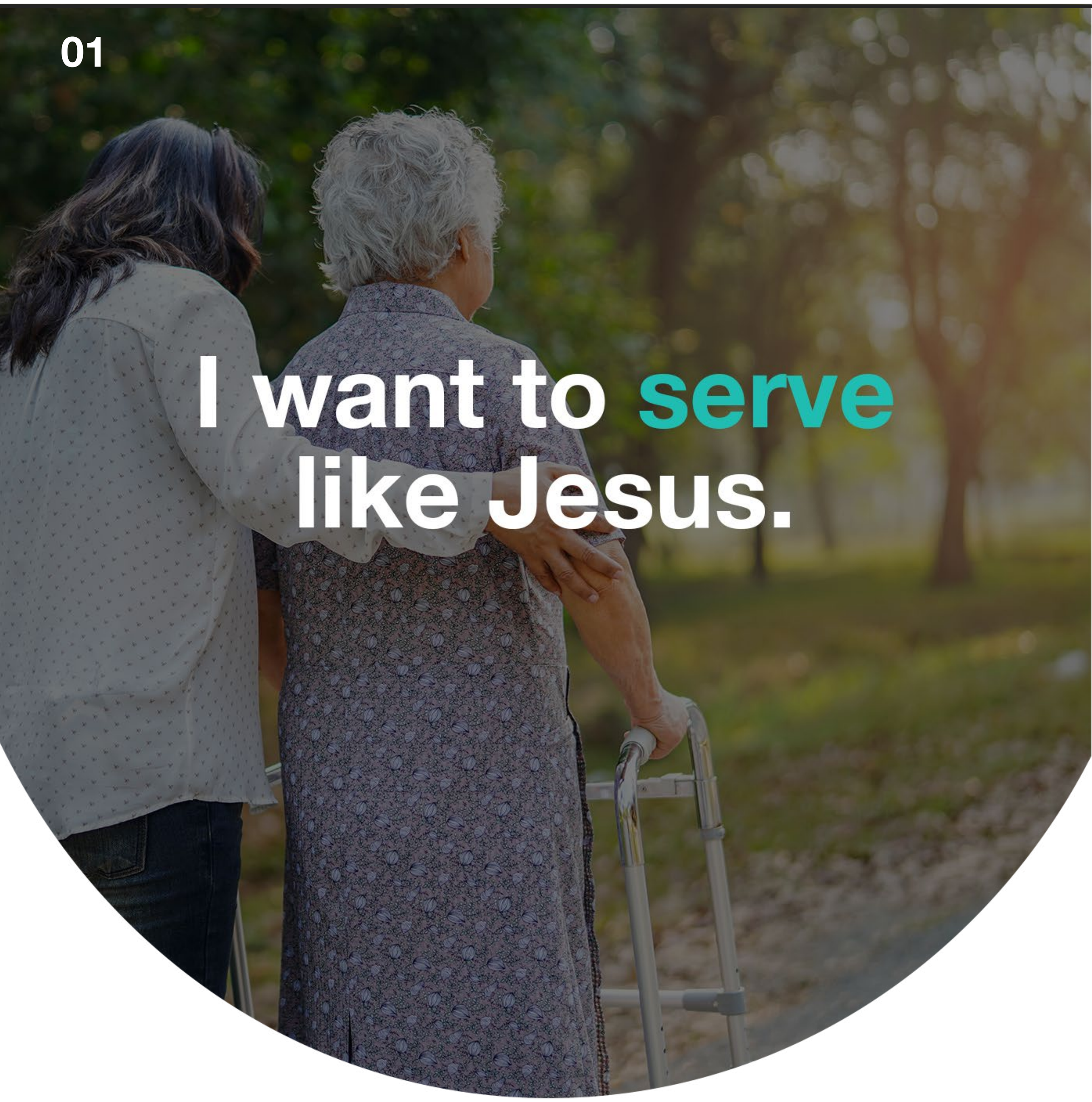
Pray today...

as you come to understand the family of God.

THANK YOU, LORD,

for the gift of community where I can belong and grow. Imperfect as we are, You have created us to serve You and to dream big dreams together. Lord, help me to see the value of others' gifts and abilities as well as my own. Give me the strength, wisdom, and insight to participate with the Church in bringing You glory. Help me as I learn to share all of life's joy and grief with the family of God. In Jesus' name, amen.

Five simple truths to transform you.



Loving and serving others—it's one of the most challenging things ever! In the body of Christ we all have the same, beautiful assignment. Grace flows when we serve others in the Church, and we follow Jesus'

loving, sacrificial example.

> *Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*
>
> **PHILIPPIANS 2:1-5 NLT**

The Lord of all creation was born as a helpless baby to humble peasants. He didn't sit on jeweled thrones. He didn't demand the attention He deserved. He came to serve and to lay His life down. This doesn't mean that Jesus was weak and powerless. ***It shows that love and servanthood is actually a greater power than fear and control.*** When we take our place of serving through the local and global church, we're following His example.

In the Bible, the apostle Paul talks about the Church functioning like a body, with Christ as the head. Just as human bodies have hands and feet, each person in

the church—the Body of Christ—has unique gifts they can contribute to the vibrant life of God's community. Together, we are the hands and feet of Jesus in the world today.

> *For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*
>
> **ROMANS 12:4-5 NIV**

We are Christ's body and each one of us is unique and important. Being in community strengthens you and blesses the people you love and serve. It is a very good thing to serve one another—to bless and be blessed.

What do you think?

What are your unique gifts? How can you use them to serve in the body of Christ?

Has a family member ever hurt your feelings? Have you gotten into an argument with a loved one? Hopefully you worked it out, apologized, and forgave them. Healthy families don't fall apart over small offenses.

The Church is a family and a refuge for the weak. Your church family is being transformed just like you are, by the power of the Holy Spirit. They will make mistakes along the way and so will you. No matter how far along we are on this journey of following Christ,

we sometimes choose to act selfishly.

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

COLOSSIANS 3:13 NLT

Remember how much you have been forgiven. You are not made right by what you do but because of Jesus' righteous blood. You will learn to forgive others like God generously forgives you. Relationships aren't easy, but they can be so deeply fulfilling!

An important note: If you are in an abusive relationship of any kind, forgiving the person who has harmed you does not mean you must continue to put yourself in situations where abuse occurs. You can use wisdom to set healthy boundaries and seek help from trusted friends and professionals.

What do you think?

What are some of the things Jesus has forgiven you of? Is there someone you need to forgive today?

Words are so important! We need our community to speak the truth over us. In the hustle and bustle of life, it's easy to forget God's truth and become confused by the lies of the adversary. We need to know that we aren't alone. The Bible isn't just our personal truth, it's the truth for all believers all over the world. We give each other essential encouragement when we speak scripture back to one another.

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

EPHESIANS 4:15 NLT

When our faith feels shaky under our feet, the Church family is like an anchor—holding us steady by speaking the truth to us in love. When you start to get off track, other believers in the Body will remind you who God is and who you are in Christ!

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12 NLT

The Body of Christ is meant to be a network of support, encouragement, mutual respect, and guidance. When we stray, our brothers and sisters will draw us back. In times of trial, they lovingly help us stand strong by speaking truth into our lives. Don't miss out on this vital support God wants you to have!

What do you think?

Do you remember a time in your life when someone lovingly told you the truth, even though it was hard to hear? Did it help in the end?

04

I want to give generously like Jesus.

For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10-11 NLT

Giving is a joy! God wants us to share all the good things He has given us—generously. He's promised to give you resources to share with others. This means we should gladly share our time, money, skills—all the good things He's given us. Even if you don't have a lot of time and money to give, you can share the rich resources of God's Kingdom by using whatever He's given you to extend His love to others. **If you have Christ living in you, you are rich with a special kind of treasure!**

> *All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.*
>
> **ACTS 4:32–35 NLT**

Can you imagine what it would be like if we all acted as though our resources were not our own, but God's? Our whole lives and everything we own belongs to Jesus. If everyone acted this way, no one would be destitute! The world tells us that everything we earn or are given is ours, and we have no obligation to share it. But God tells us in His Word that every good

thing in our lives is a gift from Him. He shows us His abundance through one another. What a blessing to participate in a generous community of givers!

What do you think?

What resources do you have to share? How can you give generously?

05

I want to treasure unity & peace like Jesus.

We were never meant to go on this journey alone. Jesus and His faithful friends walked through life's challenges together. We can too! Disagreements happen in the Church, but we are still stronger together.

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one

faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

EPHESIANS 4:3-6 NLT

We believers are all loved by one Father, forgiven through one Christ, and filled by one Spirit. The enemy of our souls will try to divide us by our opinions and preferences. But always remember that the peace and love which bind us together are more powerful than the differences which would divide us. We will all be together in eternity together with Christ, and we can all enjoy and love one another starting now!

How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!

PSALM 133:1 NLT

We are entrusted with loving one another as Christ loves us. We are brothers and sisters in the family of God. Treasure this gift we share—the unity of our common salvation in Christ. Let's protect the gift of unity He has given us—being together is truly a beautiful thing!

What do you think?

Where is God calling you to move forward in love and overlook an offense, a difference of opinion, or a debt?

THIS WEEK:

Connect with God's family—attend a local church.

The local church is an outpost of God's Kingdom in a world that desperately needs Him. When Christ makes you new, you become part of God's global Church. You become God's hands and feet in the world! The best place for you to serve and grow in your faith is

to join a local church near the community where you live.

How do I choose a local church?

Not every place that claims to be a Christian church represents what the Bible teaches. Here are some things to look for:

Look for a church with a biblical foundation:

Does the church affirm the teaching of Scripture? Is **Scripture alone** its authority for matters of life and faith or does the Bible only have a small influence on what its leaders teach?

Does the church believe in the deity of Jesus, that Jesus is God, and that Jesus' death in our place on **the Cross is the only thing that can save us**, making us right with God?

Does the church believe that in order to receive that salvation, a person must repent from sin and put his or her **faith in Jesus Christ?**

Do its leaders demonstrate spiritual leadership, **maturity** in their faith, and the **fruit of the Holy Spirit?**

Does the church believe that we are **saved by grace,** given as a gift in Christ Jesus, not by our own work?

Will I be able to use my **spiritual gifts** and thrive in my walk with God?

No two churches are alike. Churches will differ in worship style, community impact, denominational convictions, global mission, dress, etc. Most of these are matters of preference—it's up to you to pick what you like after you have ensured that the foundation of the church is biblically strong.

No church is perfect! It's not meant to be a place that meets *all of your needs*, because only Jesus, Himself, meets all your needs. You might visit several churches before you find one that's right for you. Ask God for wisdom and guidance as you search for your church home. Look for a church that puts Jesus at the center of all they do, teaches the Bible, values unity. Look for a church where you can engage in community with others—both giving and receiving.

Will you take the next step in your journey with God and attend a church service this week?

Try it out and see what God will do!

Don't give up!
It's going to be okay.

> *When you go to church, you're going to find a lot of heartache and people who are broken, just like you and me. But together, you get to journey toward God.*
> —Andrew Palau

What if someone from church hurt me in the past?

The Church is full of broken people who were made new by Jesus—people like you. **It will not always be easy—people will let you down—but it is important to stay planted in a local church.** You will flourish and become more like Jesus as you practice forgiving others and making allowance for each other's faults. God sees the Church just like He sees you—in light of the cross. He sees you and the whole Church standing before Him like a pure and spotless bride, completely clean because of what Jesus has done. **Don't isolate yourself from the gift God is giving you in the body of Christ.** Instead, forgive, dare to try again, and experience joy and transformation when you sink your roots deeply into a local church.

...let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

HEBREWS 10:25 NLT

What if I'm shy? I'm scared to visit a church.

We know it can be intimidating to go to a new place where you don't know anyone. Do you have a friend you can ask to go with you, or can you attend a church where you already know people? If not, that's okay! Show up for a Sunday morning service, and consider introducing yourself to someone. Whether you know them or not, if they follow Jesus, they are your brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are so proud of you. The fact that you've made it this far is proof that you haven't given up. You want to be close to God. You're still inviting Him to make you new, to help you grow. That's a beautiful thing!

Go and share the Good News of Jesus.

Sharing your faith can start simply with looking at how God has changed you. Your story matters. Living water can bubble out of you and refresh the people you talk to.
—Andrew Palau

Celebrate!

Have you ever heard the word, “evangelism?” It’s simpler than you may think and it’s for every believer. It’s sharing the Good News of Jesus with others.

Even if you are in the early phases of experiencing Christ’s life-changing love—you have news worth sharing. You were dead, and now you are alive! Your salvation is a miracle. Our world needs the hope and healing that only Jesus offers. The only qualification you need is hope in Jesus. **Evangelism can be as simple as telling your own story of finding that hope.**

> *This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God’s wonderful grace.*
>
> **COLOSSIANS 1:6 NLT**

God’s kingdom is always expanding! As you share God’s truth with others, you are participating in extending His kingdom here on earth. You are acting as Jesus’ hands and feet to show His amazing love and grace to the world. This is a beautiful thing!

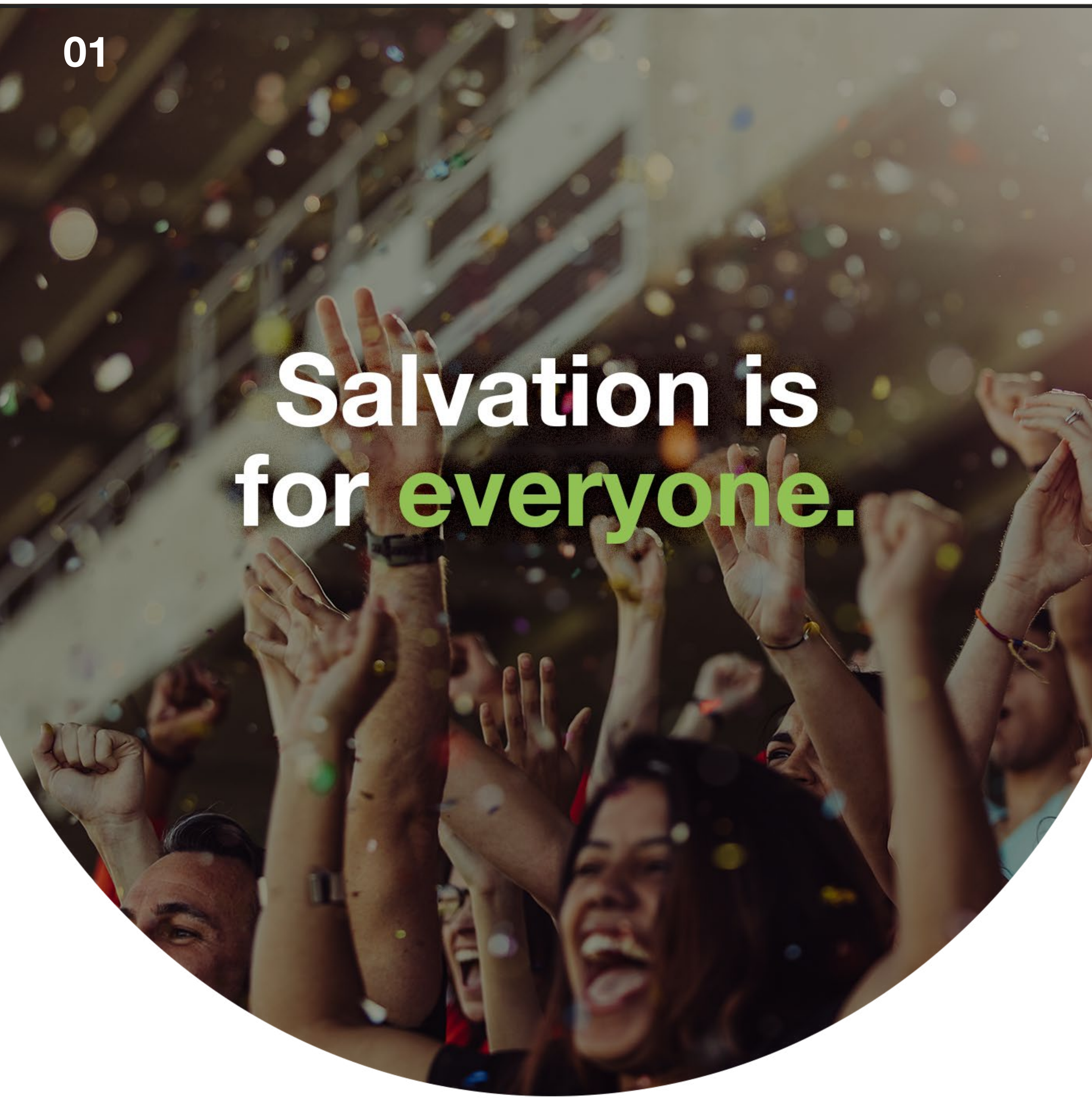
Pray today...

as you find out more about what it means to share the Gospel.

FATHER,

Thank You—You are so good. You desire that everyone, everywhere would embrace Your gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Thank You for making me new. You have done something wonderful in my life! I need Your help to be bold in sharing the Good News so that others may experience the freedom I've found in You! In Jesus' name, amen.

Five simple truths to transform you.



Something wonderful has happened in your life, and you get to share that news with everyone. You were saved out of death by the radical grace of God through Jesus' innocent blood, shed for you on the cross. Your

sins were completely paid for and you are now debt free.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

ROMANS 1:16 NIV

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

ROMANS 10:13 NLT

This gift is for everyone who will receive it! When you share your joyful news with your friends and loved ones, they will encounter the Gospel, living and working in your life. God has given the Church as a gift to the world. He has entrusted the Church with His mission—to tell others about the Good News found in Jesus.

And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone."

MARK 16:15 NLT

What do you think?

When you hear the word, "evangelism," what's the first thing you think of?

02

God is patiently waiting for the Gospel to reach the ends of the earth so that people everywhere may have a chance to repent. He wants everyone to have the opportunity to hear the Good News that Jesus came to rescue them. Every last person on planet Earth was created in the image of God, to know His love.

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind,

the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

1 TIMOTHY 2:3-6 NIV

He offers life to everyone—to experience the grace, joy, and peace that come from a restored relationship. His forgiveness and cleansing is offered to all who believe in Him.

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

2 PETER 3:9 NLT

That's right, Christ is being patient in His returning to Earth for our sake, so we can have more time to share the Good News. We can start today! Spreading the Gospel doesn't require fancy speech, just simple and joyful proclamation of what God has already done in your life. This is how the Gospel will reach all the world—as God's Spirit works through one person (just like you) at a time!

What do you think?

Do you know anyone who's heading toward destruction? What can you share with them?

You can shine with the light of Christ's love for the world. As you live your new life for God's purposes, others will begin to see that there's something different about you. **And what they'll really notice is the way you love people.**

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. **JOHN 13:34-35 NLT**

They may wonder what's going on. They might ask you why you're so kind, and where this unusual love comes from. They may notice that you show love to people who aren't loving toward you—even your enemies! What a perfect opportunity to share your story. **You just tell them the truth—you're able to love others well because Christ first loved you.**

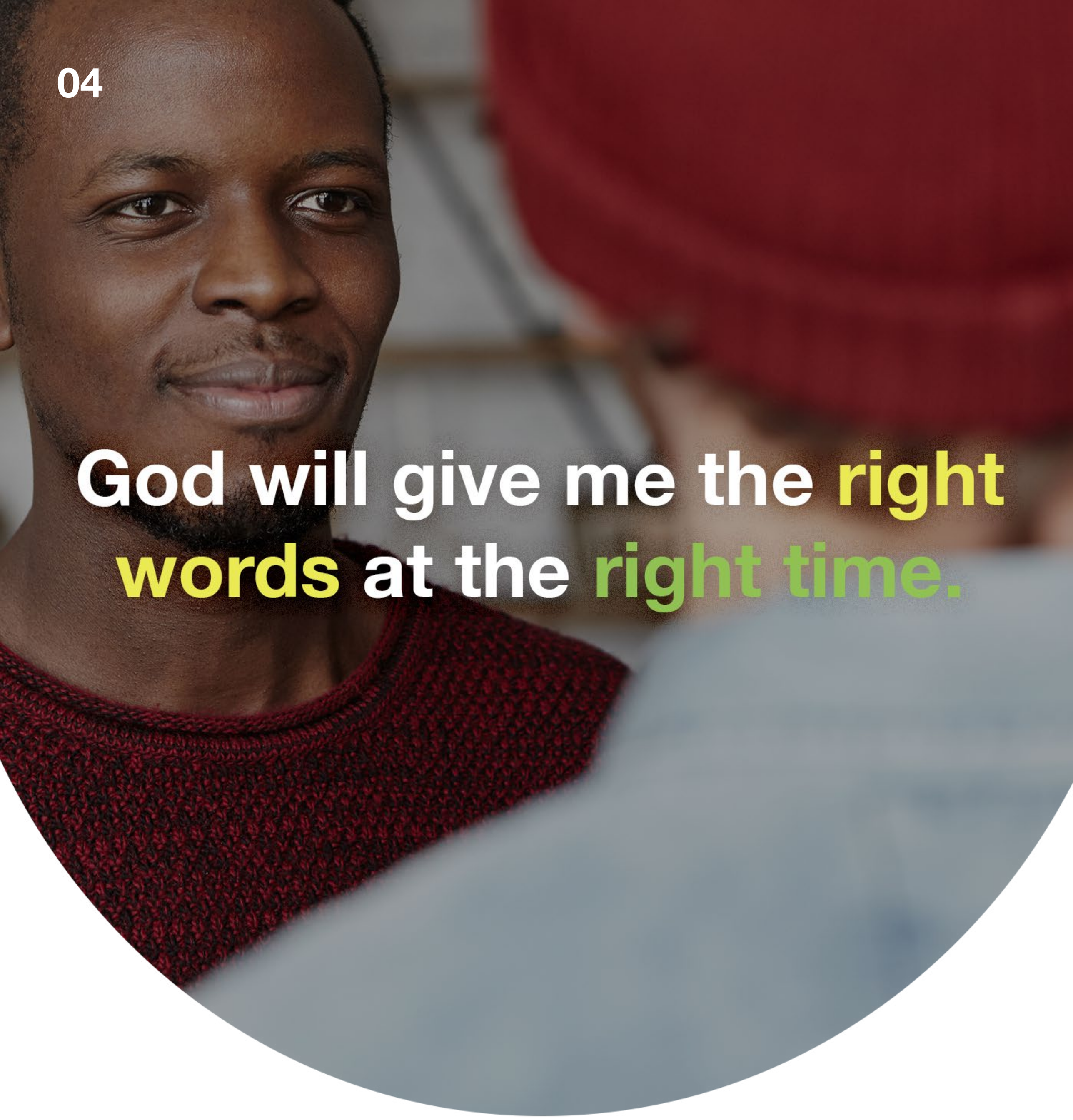
We love each other because he loved us first.

1 JOHN 4:19 NIV

God's love is a bright light shining in a dark world, and you have been filled with this light. It draws hurting and broken people to Jesus. Let it shine through you!

What do you think?

If someone asked you today, "What's different about you?"—what would you tell them?



Are you wondering if you'll be able to find the perfect words to share the Gospel? **Guess what**—*the pressure is not on you!* The Word of God tells us that when we share the Good News, the Holy Spirit will help you—even speak through you.

...God will give you the right words at the right time. For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

MATTHEW 10:19-20 NLT

We can get so hung up on wondering if we will offend people, or make them feel uncomfortable. The truth is, we're probably the ones who feel the most uncomfortable. Even though we may stammer, feeling awkward about what to say, the Holy Spirit has it handled! He will give us the right words, and lead us to proclaim them at the right time. All we have to do is follow His lead. Be encouraged to do it and do not be afraid. But also, do not wait to feel perfectly comfortably or completely brave—or you may never speak up! Christ has already called and commanded that we share Good News, so let's do it even when we're afraid.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:19-20 NIV

What do you think?

Can you picture the Holy Spirit speaking through you to share the Gospel?

You never have to be afraid of sharing the Gospel. Just as God is not ashamed to call you His beloved child, there's no need to be ashamed to proclaim that He's your Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit brings power and love, not fear. He has done wonderful things in your life, which are not meant to be kept private. Let everyone in on the Good News which has radically changed your life!

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7-8 NLT

You've been saved but there are many who still don't know God. Your story could help someone to come to God. He will use you as you step out in faith. Go and make Him known. Share the Good News! Ask God to take away your fear and replace obstacles with open doors.

What do you think?

What are some of the obstacles that may block you from sharing the Gospel?

THIS WEEK:

Share what God has done in your life with someone!

When we find a product we love, we talk about it. When we discover a favorite recipe, we share it. Congratulations on finding the greatest treasure in the universe—Jesus! If you haven't begun to share the Gospel yet, now is the time.

This Bible story shows the simplicity of evangelism. It's about a woman who unexpectedly met the Savior of the world while she was fetching water from a well. Once she realized He was the Messiah, she dropped what she was doing and ran to tell everyone!

Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, "He told me everything I ever did!" When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, long enough for many more to hear his message and believe.

Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."

JOHN 4:39-42 NLT

You are a living testimony to the power of God. Share what you have—it's the most powerful thing in the world!

Here are some simple ways to start sharing the Good News for the first time.

Something happened recently that I really want to tell you about…

I'm a different person from when I saw you last! Let me tell you what happened…

You are so important to me. Can I tell you about something that changed my life?

I want you to know that God loves you right now. Do you mind if I tell you about how God's love is transforming me?

Will you tell someone about Jesus today? Try it out, and see what God will do.

Don't give up! It's going to be okay.

There are people in your life whose hearts are ready to come to God. Your story could help them to take that step. Isn't that amazing? I know it can seem overwhelming or intimidating, but I believe God will lead you and give you courage.

—Andrew Palau

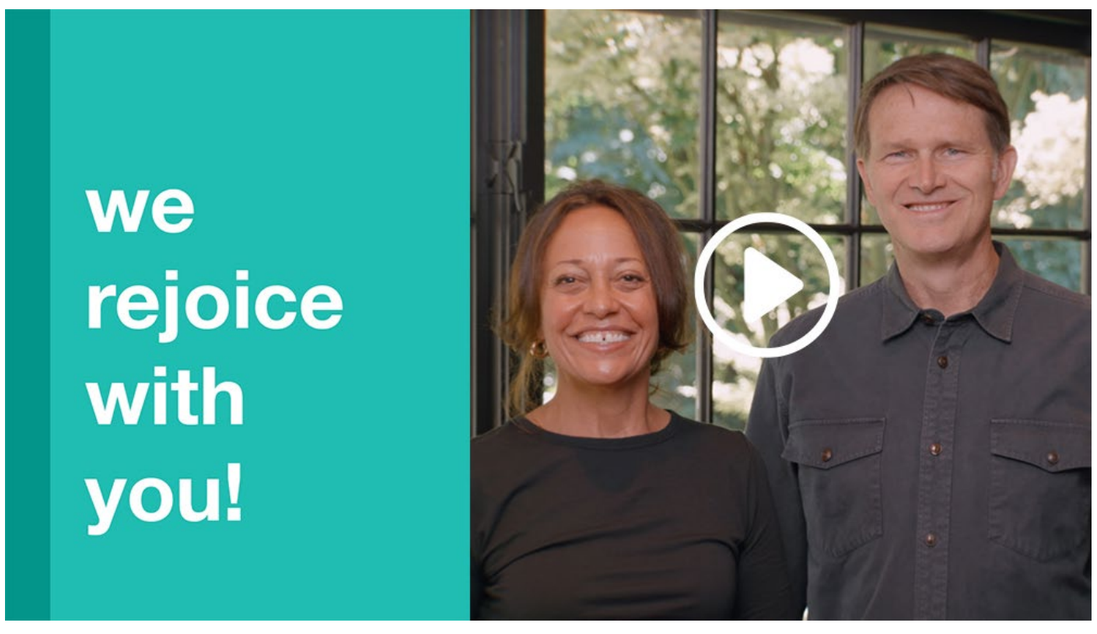
I'm terrible with words.

Telling others about Jesus can feel awkward. It's easy to feel like you don't have the right words to capture such a wonderful truth. That's okay. Sharing the Gospel doesn't have to be elaborate. ***You can simply share from the heart about what has happened in your own life.*** Trust the Holy Spirit to speak for you. Don't let nervousness stop you!

Proclaiming the Gospel doesn't mean walking around with a sermon stuffed into your back pocket. It's just saying the Good News: "God loves you, He has a plan for your life. If you are honest, repent, and believe, you will be forgiven and become a child of God. He will never leave you. He's offering you eternal life" That's a pretty good deal! Why not proclaim it? It is not your job to brilliantly persuade, merely to joyfully present.

Be encouraged.

As you continue on your journey, we would love to provide biblical encouragement. Click any of the images below to watch our videos for you on the Made New website.



Welcome

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Understand

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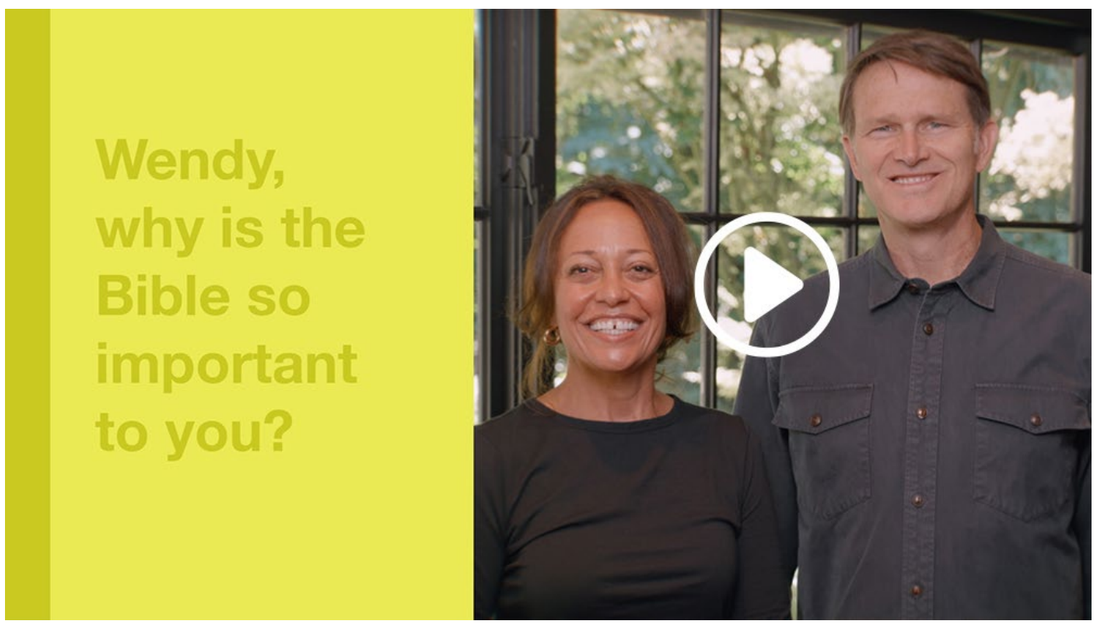

Hear

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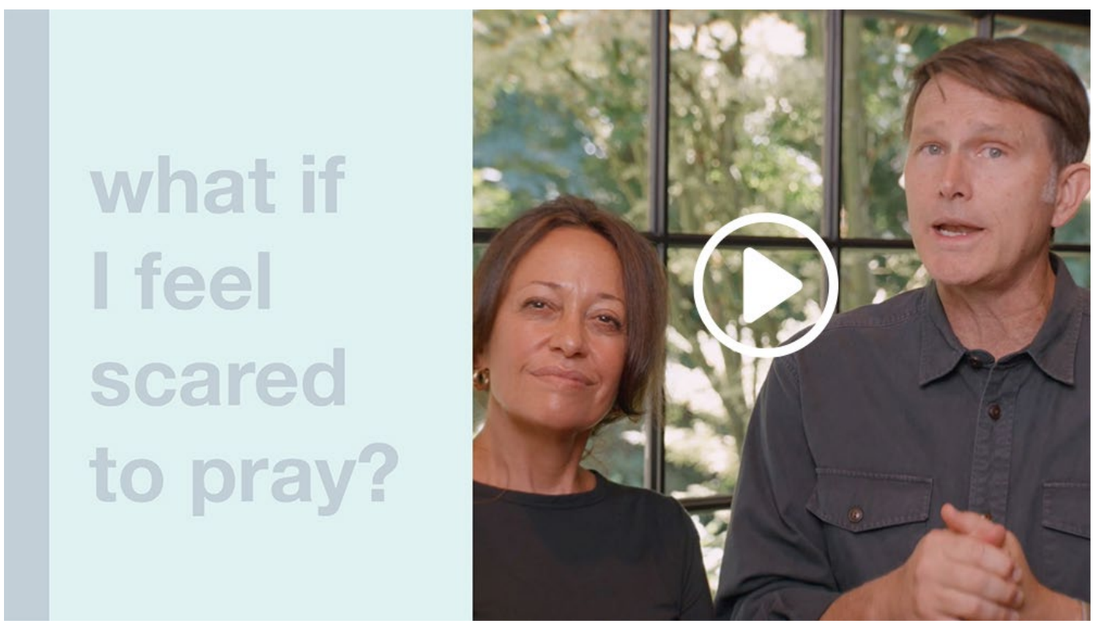

Pray

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can God really forgive me?

Forgive

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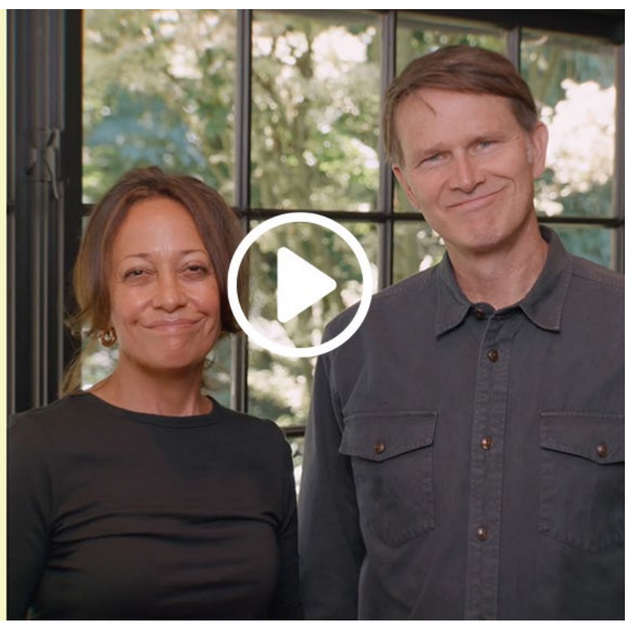
how can I know that God is with me?



Receive

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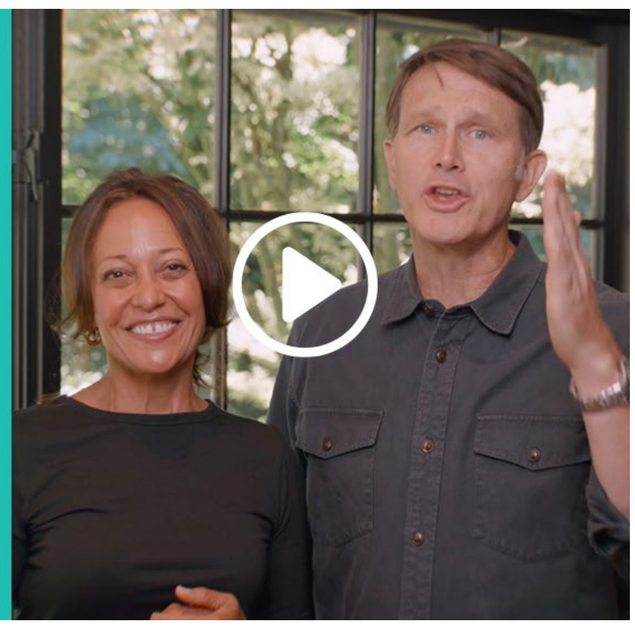
Andrew, what's so beautiful about the Church?



Connect

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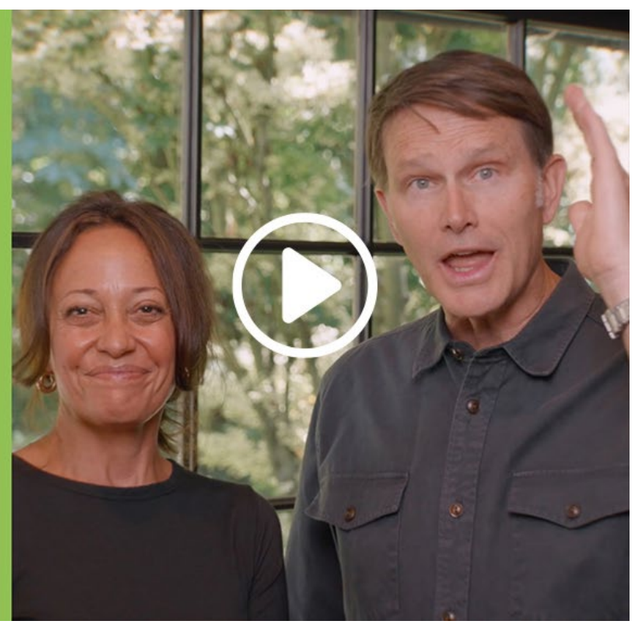
let's go and share what God has done!



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with Andrew & Wendy Palau + will you let God transform you?

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