

AFTER GOD'S HEART

A person is walking away from the viewer on a paved path that curves through a landscape. In the background, a large mountain range is silhouetted against a bright, glowing sunrise or sunset. The sky is a mix of dark blue and orange. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

WEEK 1

SEEING GOD

Devotions by Amy Linkous

THE DARKER THE NIGHT, THE MORE HIS LIGHT SHINES

DAY 1

READ Isaiah 6:1-4

Becky's brown eyes always stood out to me, but captured on an overcast evening at Virginia Tech as a fresh-faced 18-year-old, they were more doe-like than ever, beaming in contrast to the gray sky, revealing that her eyes were still "Precious Moments" eyes, as my mom called them when she was a toddler.

My sister-in-law Luisa says the best photos are at sunset, even maybe on an overcast, fall evening. The time of long dark shadows is the setting to capture the light in our eyes.

"It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord," Isaiah 6:1b, NLT. When darkness came in Isaiah's life and in the life of his people, Isaiah saw the Lord. Loss of a leader is scary for a nation. And that's when God revealed Himself to Isaiah. That's when Isaiah saw Him. Could it be that is the time Isaiah's heart hungered for the Lord more and his eyes were open to the Lord in a greater way than ever?

The darkest of times display more magnificent views of God. In hard times, His Holiness, His Righteousness, His "other than us" shines brightly, and we see Him.

He is better than us.
He is stronger than us.
He eclipses our darkness.
His eyes shine brighter, the darker the night.

When the hard times come, just as Jesus said they would (John 16:33), look to see God better. You will see Him shining. Seeing His light outshine the dark, time and time again through years of following Him, will solidify your trust in Him. You'll be forever tethered to His side, hungry to see more of His light break through in radiant display in contrast to your broken world.

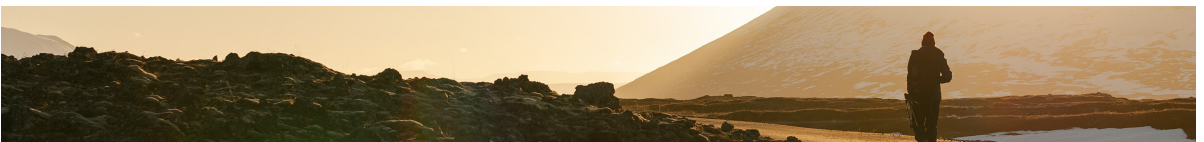
Don't fear the darkness around you, because it is there you'll find the Father's love.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father, I pray that my eyes will be flooded with Your light. Make my eyes focused and clear, so I can grasp how holy and glorious You are (Ephesians 1:18). In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

"Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; He saved him out of all his troubles."

Psalms 34:5-6, (NIV)



BE STILL AND LOOK AT HIM DAY 2

“Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.” Psalm 46:10 (NLT)

Are you hurting today? Be still, and look at Him. He has allowed you to see Him because He finds you lovely. Beautiful. Rest and be quiet. Simply know, that He is.

He is God.

Know that He is God. That’s all you need to know and be content in that knowing, like a “weaned child,” Psalm 131. Stop flailing, writhing, tearing your “clothes” in grief and still yourself and your emotions in the depth of knowing “He is”. He says, “I Am” (Exodus 3:14), and “I Am” is enough.

He meets you there, in the depth of your pain, as “deep calls to deep” (Psalm 42:7). Stay beside Him and rest. Let the mystery of His Holiness touch your face like a mist. Rest and wait for him.

Even when it’s a long wait, “wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart. . .” Psalm 27:14 Hear the Lord saying,

I Am.
Here, let Me.
Yield.

In times of much pain, it’s hard to see that He’s holding you safely on his chest, caring for you. The Lord is gently peeling back the scales on your eyes and showing you His strength and holiness. He is watching you, knowingly, as you sit in His Presence. He is waiting on you even as you wait on Him, waiting on you to quiet yourself and silence the voices that are not Him. Listen for Him and tune out the static. Catch your best picture of Him and stay there. Sit and watch Him.

The work He is doing in you is His work, and His work is worth your wait.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father, give me eyes of faith to see You, to know You are caring for me, to wait on You, and to yield to You. Thank You for being my faithful Father. I trust You to complete the good work You began in me. In Jesus’ Holy Name, I pray. Amen.

“Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but He has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He really is.”
1 John 1:32 (NLT)

DAY 3

OPEN MY EYES, LORD, I WANT TO SEE YOU

Our God is too holy for even the angels to look at Him! “Attending Him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.”

Isaiah 6:2 (NLT)

Yet, Isaiah “saw the Lord,” in verse 1. Almighty God deliberately chose to reveal Himself to Isaiah, a human, in such a way that Isaiah saw Him.

Everyone’s eyes have seen unholy things; we all “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), but the same God who wanted Isaiah to see Him became a man so that we all could see Him. He captures our eyes with His holiness, His splendor, His sinlessness, and His free gift that frees us from sin.

Today, as Helen Lemmel wrote in this song,

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

Turn away from the unholy things you choose to see, and thank the Lord for your undeserved chance to see Jesus. Look at Him. The more you watch Him, the more your hunger will grow. Keep looking, and you’ll become more and more like Him.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father, thank You for the honor of being able to see You, the One from whom angels hide their faces. You do not hide from me, and I don’t have to hide from You because You became a man and died for my sins! Thank You for becoming a man so we could look at You and live. Forgive me for my sins and give me eyes that don’t look to the left or right but look straight to You! In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

“But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image.”

II Corinthians 3:16-18, NLT

DAY 4

I SEE THE LORD OF ANGEL ARMIES

[The angels] were calling out to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven’s armies. The whole earth is filled with His glory!” Isaiah 6:3 NLT

Ryan and I stood on the rooftop of Pastor Isa Zougbi’s generational home in Bethlehem and looked out over the land of Jesse, David’s father (I Samuel 16). Pastor Isa, a Palestinian Christian whose family says they’ve been in Bethlehem since the time of Jesus, pointed to the field where armies of angels appeared to the shepherds announcing Jesus’ birth and giving God praise. With the warm, midday sun on my back, over two thousand years later, I stood in awe. I felt the weight of His power as I imagined the “the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased,’” Luke 2:13-14, NLT.

There are armies of angels.

Though I have never seen an angel, my mom, a Spirit-filled pastor’s daughter and retired RN, does. She is humble and quiet about her sightings, being certain she gives God glory through the experiences and not the angels — or herself. After all, angelic beings are God’s servants, just as we are; although they are a little higher than us (Psalm 8:5), and they, like us, are not to be worshiped (Colossians 2:18). Only God is to be worshiped.

The angels my mom sees minister in various capacities. Among other duties, she sees them filling homes, surrounding property, guarding pastors while preaching, and protecting traveling cars. Her eyes see a variety of fascinating sizes of angels: little ones flying around and massive ones, bigger than buildings, standing guard. Once she saw the mysterious underside of angel wings over hundreds of people, canopying an entire church congregation. Her descriptions are stunning and revealing, describing their supernatural strength and words they speak.

God has commissioned vast armies of angels to care for us.

How many angels are there? We don’t know, but Psalm 91:11 says, “For he will order his angels to protect you where you go.” This means each one of us has not just one, but at least two angels protecting us!

“For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him.” Psalm 37:4

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Heavenly Father, You are holy, and I praise You! You have whole armies of angels who worship and serve You, around the clock, everywhere! I give thanks for Your Word and claim that the angels are sent out by You to accompany and protect me and all those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.



DAY 5

THE WHOLE EARTH IS FILLED WITH HIS GLORY

“...Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea...sang: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the One sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.’” Revelation 5:13 (NLT)

We aren’t the only ones who worship God. The whole earth worships Him, full-time on full display! Psalm 148 lists everything (and everyone) that praises Him:

- the heavens and skies
- angel armies of heaven
- the sun, moon and stars
- the vapors high above the clouds
- creatures of the ocean depths
- fire, hail, snow, clouds, wind and weather
- mountains and all hills
- fruit trees and all cedars
- wild animals and all livestock
- small scurrying animals and birds
- kings of the earth and all people
- rulers and judges of the earth
- young people
- older people
- children

As a young mom, I watched nature praise God on a summer day. The wind conducted the hayfields like a symphony orchestra. Swooshing in praise, the sound was rhythmic, and the sight was powerful, rivaled only by the praise of the ocean.

Just last summer, I sat on my deck overlooking the woods. I was shocked by the sound of a stadium of applause; then I realized it was coming from the trees! As the Bible says, they were clapping their hands (Isaiah 55:12). The crowd went wild; hundreds of trees offered thousands of hands of praise, and God was the main attraction!

Step outside. Watch; listen as all creation responds in praise to our Maker. Join creation in praising Him today. The whole earth truly is filled with His glory (Isaiah 6:3)!

PRAYER FOR TODAY

God of creation, I join nature in praising You as Creator and King, today! Teach me to praise You with my whole heart. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

“For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.” Romans 1:20 (NLT)

SHAKE US UP

DAY 6

“[The angels’] voices shook the Temple to its foundations,”
Isaiah 6:4 (NLT)

On his small farm, my daddy planted plums, pears, apples, peaches, figs and scuppernongs for us kids. We stood in the shade of these trees on hot days, and ate until our tummies hurt!

The plums were our favorite, but we couldn’t reach them. The tree was small, and so were we. We rammed our small bodies into the trunk to shake it. “Boomp!” Plums would hit my head or the top of my bare foot.

As we got older, so did the tree, and it was filled with many more plums. We could finally reach its limbs to shake them, making for a huge rainfall of plums beating our legs! What we really loved was for the shaking to cause some of the higher limbs to release fruit. The ripest, juiciest, ones came from up near the sun!

You’re a tree! The Bible calls you “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,” Isaiah 61:3b (NIV), bearing fruit each season (Psalm 1). God reaches the fruit at the top of your tree by shaking you and allowing you to face trials. The shaking gives you stronger roots and enhances the potential for more fruit in the next season.

“For this is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: ‘In just a little while I will again shake the heavens and the earth, the oceans and the dry land.’” Haggai 2:6 (NLT)

Each day you are closer to the Lord’s return when He will take you home with Him. God is harvesting people all over the world through shaking. Submit to God in times of trial. What you’re going through may feel impossible, but trust God to use this to strengthen you, cause you to bear much fruit, and help you release the fruit to Him each season.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father, I see the signs all around me. You are coming soon. Even though the shaking is disruptive and painful, it is an honor when You take time to shake me and bring fruit. You are readying my heart for heaven, and You are gathering Your harvest. I yield to You. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

“To all who mourn in Israel, He will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for His own glory.” Isaiah 61:3 (NLT)

FILL THIS TEMPLE DAY 7

"[God] was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of His robe filled the Temple . . . and the entire building was filled with smoke." Isaiah 6:1b & 4 (NLT)

Our holy God cannot even look at sin; so, we could not come to Him. He loved us so much that He came to us as a sinless man, Jesus, and He died to take away our sins. God made Jesus sin so that through Jesus, we could come to God and be made right with Him (I Corinthians 5:21).

"Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Ephesians 3:17a (NLT)

Now, God dwells in you; He, "does not live in temples built by human hands." Acts 17:24b (NIV)

"Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?" I Corinthians 3:16 (NLT)

You are the temple, now! Knowing that, look back and read Isaiah 6:1b & 4, above:

You are the temple, the dwelling place of God.

Your heart is His throne.

Like His robe, His Spirit fills you, the temple, with the glory of God.

The angels sing, "Holy is the Lord," in response to God's plan to make you His!

PRAYER FOR TODAY

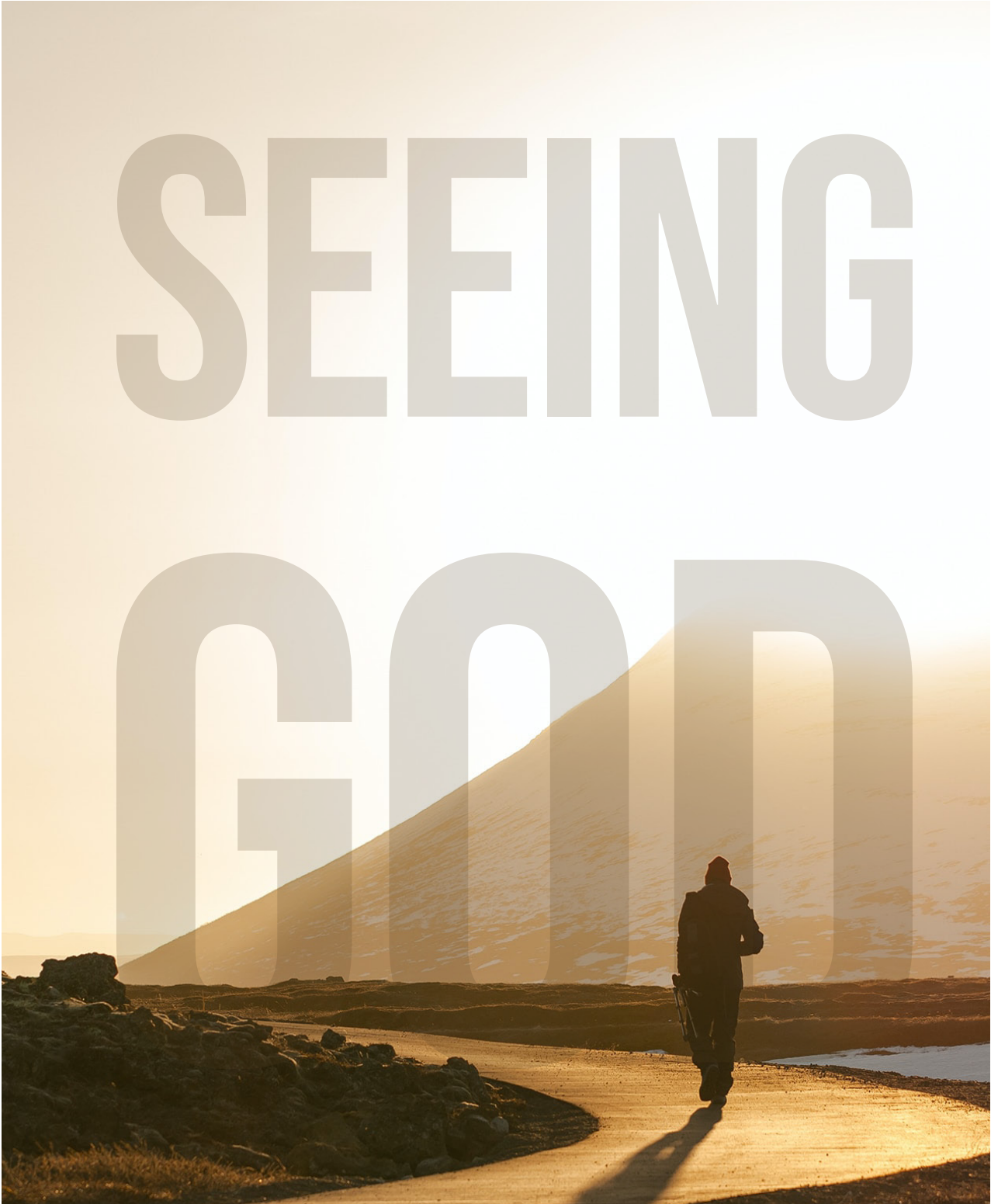
Lord God Almighty, I am humbled and honored that You, the God of all creation, would choose to make my heart Your home. Thank You for filling me, Your temple, with Your Holy Spirit. I ask You to move and do in me whatever needs to be done to bring You glory as long as I live! In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.


"What joy for those You choose to bring near, those who live in Your holy courts. What festivities await us inside Your holy Temple." Psalm 65:4 (NLT)



SEEING

GOOD





AFTER GOD'S HEART

WEEK 2

SEEING ME

DEVOTIONS BY AMY LINKOUS

I AM FILTHY

DAY 1

"I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies." Isaiah 6:5b (NLT)

"Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" John 1:46 (NLT)

Nazareth was a tiny little town with a bad reputation of sorts. Can anything good come out of it?

Yes! Something good did come. The Ultimate Good, Jesus, the Savior of the world came out of Nazareth!

When God created mankind, He called us "good", but when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, sin entered the hearts of mankind (Genesis 1-3). From that time on, we were born filthy. Psalm 51:5 says, "For I was born a sinner—from the moment my mother conceived me."

Some of us try to fix this by being a "good person". But that doesn't make us clean. The Bible calls our self-righteousness filthy, bathroom rags (Isaiah 64:6).

So how about you? Is there any hope for good to come out of your filthy life and unclean culture? Yes! Jesus is holding His hand out, and He gives you beauty for ashes (Isaiah 61:3). Humble yourself, pray, look at Him and turn from your selfish, sinful ways. He will heal you and your people (II Chronicles 7:14).

"He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right." I Peter 2:24a NLT

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Holy God, I am filthy, unclean, and unfit for Your presence. I am humbled and thankful that You revealed Yourself to me. I give myself to You. Wash me, and make me right. Thank You that by the Blood of Jesus, I am clean. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

"All have sinned and are not good enough to share God's divine greatness. They are made right with God by His grace. This is a free gift. They are made right with God by being made free from sin through Jesus Christ." Romans 3:23-24 (ERV)



I AM UNDONE DAY 2

“Stick a fork in me, I’m done!” At times my reaction to things that ruin my plans or hurt me has been to say aloud or think to myself, “I’m done!” I’m done with this person, this situation, with being treated unfairly, done with sickness or trials. I want to “take my toys and go home”!

When Isaiah saw the Lord, he said, “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips”
Isaiah 6:5a (NIV)

What’s the difference between being done and undone?

“Done” is pride talking. It’s saving face. We feel like we were dealt an unfair hand and want to quit playing. In contrast, being “undone” says, “I cannot do this without You, God.”
Done is discontent and sullen. Undone is laying it down at the cross and giving up control to Him.
Done exerts the power of self. Undone surrenders power and bows to the power of God, admitting that if anything will be done, it’ll be done by God.
Done is arms crossed, still trying to figure it out. Undone is laying it at His feet, submitting to and waiting on God.

Meditating on “being done” leads to sin and danger. “Being undone” is beginning again with God.

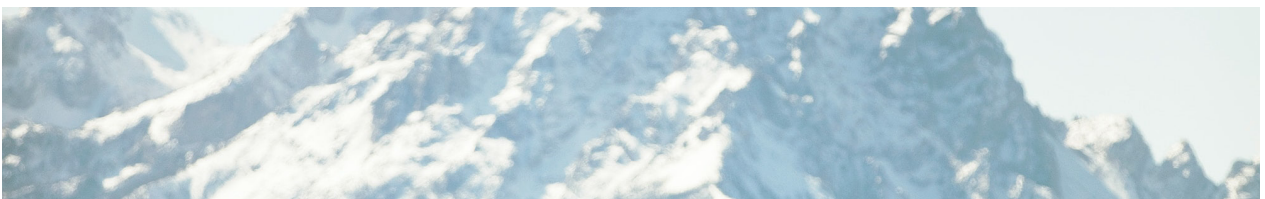
Concerning your most difficult (maybe even recurring) issue ask yourself, is my attitude done or undone? Am I ready for God to step in and have His way and the final say? Choose to be undone, and release the outcome to the Lord. He will do a better job than you. Tell God you’re undone today. Give up your will to make room for God’s.

Jesus will get it done! “It is finished!” John 19:30 (NLT)

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Dear Lord, You see my heart and how I get frustrated and want to quit. You have the last say in my life, not me. You are God, and I am not. Forgive me for rising up in pride instead of falling at Your feet. At the sight of all You are, all You’ve done, and all You are doing, I am humbled and undone. I cannot make it without You. I surrender my pride and broken situations to Your holiness. In Jesus’ Name and strength, I pray. Amen.

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6 (NLT)



HE SEES ME DAY 3

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” II Chronicles 16:9a (NLT)

My sister-in-law Rachel was a young girl when she, alone in her bedroom in Oregon, lit a candle. She asked God, if He was real, would He please show her. Later as a fifteen-year-old and through a series of difficult events, she was forced to leave her dad on the West Coast. Leaving behind all she owned except for one suitcase, she flew across the country to go live with her mom in Florida. When she enrolled in school, she met a friend who invited Rachel to church with her. Rachel came to know Jesus as her Savior. God heard her prayer, and He showed her He was real. Rachel saw God, and God saw her.

Genesis 16 tells the story of Hagar, a young runaway slave girl, pregnant by her owner's husband and caught up in a complicated abusive situation. The angel of the Lord found Hagar in the wilderness and told her to go back to her owners, promising He would bless her descendants. The angel said, "...the Lord has heard your cry of distress." Genesis 16:11b (NLT)

Hagar gave this name to the Lord; "“You are the God who sees me,” for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’" Genesis 16:13 (NIV)

The same God who saw Rachel and Hagar sees you. Are you going through a new, uncomfortable season of life? Do you feel driven away from the familiar? In the “wilderness”, you're in a great position to see God. He will use this moment. Cry out to Him in trouble, no matter how small or big it is, and You will see the God who sees you.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father, you see me where I am right now. I know you have been waiting on me and already preparing a way for me to see You in this season. I cry out to You and ask You to show me Yourself. Let me know that You are with me and that I am not alone. Thank You for seeing me. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

“And the Lord said, ‘...I am pleased with you and I know you by name.’ Then Moses said, ‘Now show me Your glory.’” Exodus 33:17b-18 (NIV)



I AM RESERVED DAY 4

“...Your body is a temple for the Holy Spirit that you received from God and that lives in you. You don’t own yourselves. God paid a very high price to make you His. So honor God with your body.” I Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT)

Before God sent His Son, He lived in a temple that He instructed His people to make for Him. God Himself resided in the Holy of Holies, a special room inside where only the high priest could go.

Through Jesus’ sacrifice, God paid for you, making you His temple. God doesn’t just rent you and come and go. No, He took up residency in you. Your heart is the Holy of Holies. He won’t share you, His temple, with other gods, and you should not open it to others. You are holy and set apart for Him.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

When dealing with her coworkers, my mom said she had the habit of quietly asking the Lord to guard her mouth. One day, the Lord reminded her that if she would guard her heart, what came out of her mouth would be of Him.

You have eyes and ears, gates to your temple. Both godly and ungodly ideas gain entrance to your heart through your eyes and ears and come out through words and actions. Is what you are letting into your eye and ear gates pleasing to God? Are things you’re allowing into your heart something that God can share space with? Do you grasp the seriousness when it comes to protecting your temple and not allowing anything to come in that would defile it? He takes it very seriously because you’re His property.

“If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” I Corinthians 3:17 (NKJV)

By asking Jesus to be Your Savior, Your heart has been reserved permanently for the King of Kings. Honor His reservation and only allow Him inside.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Dear God, my heart is Your home. Help me to shut my gates to people, places, and things that defile my heart. I desire to keep Your dwelling place holy. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to You (Psalm 19:14). In the Name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

“...Dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.” II Corinthians 7:1 (NLT)



HE IS MY MIRROR DAY 5

“But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

II Corinthians 3:18 (KJV)

As a child, Ms. Coleman handed me a mirror to keep me quiet in church. I can still hear Brother Fortson preaching as I looked at each eye, my nose, my mouth, each ear, my hair, and twisted my mouth in various directions to make everything else look funny. Years later, I lost track of time doing toothpaste “commercials” in the mirror! As a teen, I labored in the mirror for hours, burning my hair slap off with curling irons and hot rollers trying to get the Farrah Fawcett look! Now, I use my phone to check my teeth after eating and to make sure my mascara is ok after crying.

We have a mirror that God gave to show us how to present ourselves to Him. Since God is holy and He is His Word (John 1), we see how we really look when we gaze into His Word. While listening to God’s Word, we see our true condition. He shows us how to make adjustments to look more and more like Him.

“But don’t just listen to God’s Word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the Word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.”

James 1:22-25 (NLT)

He’s your original designer; He has the master blueprint. The further you move away from the mirror of His Word, the more you embellish yourself to look spiritual for people, not God. What you do to make yourself more spiritually attractive isn’t in His design. The more you listen to God’s Word and take time to obey and fix what the mirror of God’s Word reveals, the more you will see who He made you to be, the unveiling of His artwork. You can see yourself rightly after you have seen yourself in His Word.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father, I am tired of fixing myself on my own without You. I turn from looking to anyone or anything else but You to define me. Show me Yourself in Your Word and teach me to follow You. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

“...We are already God’s children, but He has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like Him, for we will see Him as he really is.” I John 3:2b (NLT)

YOU PRUNE ME DAY 6

"Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it and said, 'See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.'" Isaiah 6:6-7a (NLT)

For Elia's birthday, Aspen King gave her the biggest bouquet of flowers I have ever seen! They were fresh, too, and lasted so long. Today, I took a lot of time cutting the bad parts off to keep them pretty... because I like them, and they make my daughter's days bright and pretty. I didn't take ten minutes of my precious time to take the flowers out of the vase, rinse them, walk them out on the deck and chop off the ends of their stems because I hated them. I cut them because I valued them.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes that it will be even more fruitful." John 15:1-2 (NIV)

The pruning process hurts. Do you ever feel cut down, demoted? You're God's treasured flower from His garden, and when He cuts you back, He is being extra good to you.

My grandmother Adams used to burn her grass to make it come back prettier, fuller and greener. A master gardener knows how to use fire and cutting sheers to cause plants to reach their full potential.

God is your master gardener, and you are the planting of the Lord. Pruning is the way He saves you. He does it because He cares. It's the only way for you to live. Whatever you're facing, He is saving you this way! Whatever fire or cut-back, through the process somehow He is being good and patient towards you, His well-loved child. In the fire, the Lord is loosing you, freeing you, and purifying you.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Dear God, it burns! I feel the fire of Your coal touching my unclean lips, and it hurts. I would rather stay this way, but I see that I need You to clean me and remove what's not good for me. I surrender to Your pruning and ask that You strengthen my heart as I wait on You to restore me and bring new growth. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

"But He knows the way that I take [and He pays attention to it]. When He has tried me, I will come forth as [refined] gold [pure and luminous]." Job 23:10 (AMP)



I AM FORGIVEN DAY 7

“Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” Isaiah 6:7b (NIV)

Guilt is not a virtue. While Godly sorrow for our sins is good and results in salvation (II Corinthians 7:10), we are not to carry the tremendous burden of guilt past the day He forgave us. Jesus already carried it for us on the cross.

I remember when my friend Darcy told me guilt was not of God. I was in my thirties and had never heard that! I seriously wondered if we were reading the same Bible!

Darcy was right. Guilt is a product of sin, and guilt is exactly why we needed Jesus to die on the cross. On the cross, Jesus paid the high price for our freedom from guilt. The only one who wants us to remain in guilt is Satan, not God. Giving guilt a seat at your table is sinning against God.

Resist guilt:

When you believe you don't deserve His forgiveness, you are saying His death and resurrection is not quite enough.

Thinking that God can't forgive you or that you can't forgive yourself is “me-centered”. You may be trusting in your works for salvation. “God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.” Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

You are not the one that Jesus could not set free. This is a lie from Satan. Jesus became the guilty one so you could be free.

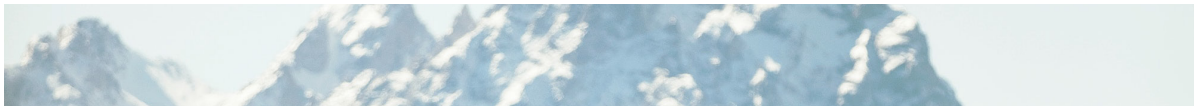
Remove yourself as judge and juror over yourself and give God that spot! You'll be so pleased to place your heart in the hands of the only Righteous, Right Judge. He sees you as “not guilty”, covered by Jesus' blood. “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is He who will save us.” Isaiah 33:22 (NIV)

You'll be shouting soon as you focus on what He did instead of what you did. He came to earth as a man and died for you. He gave everything. It's final, and it's enough.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father, please forgive me for nurturing guilt in my life and keeping it alive. I refuse and deny guilt based on the fact that Jesus paid the entire price for my sin so that I could be pronounced “not guilty”. I am sorry for carrying guilt, and I will live in Your light and not in condemnation. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

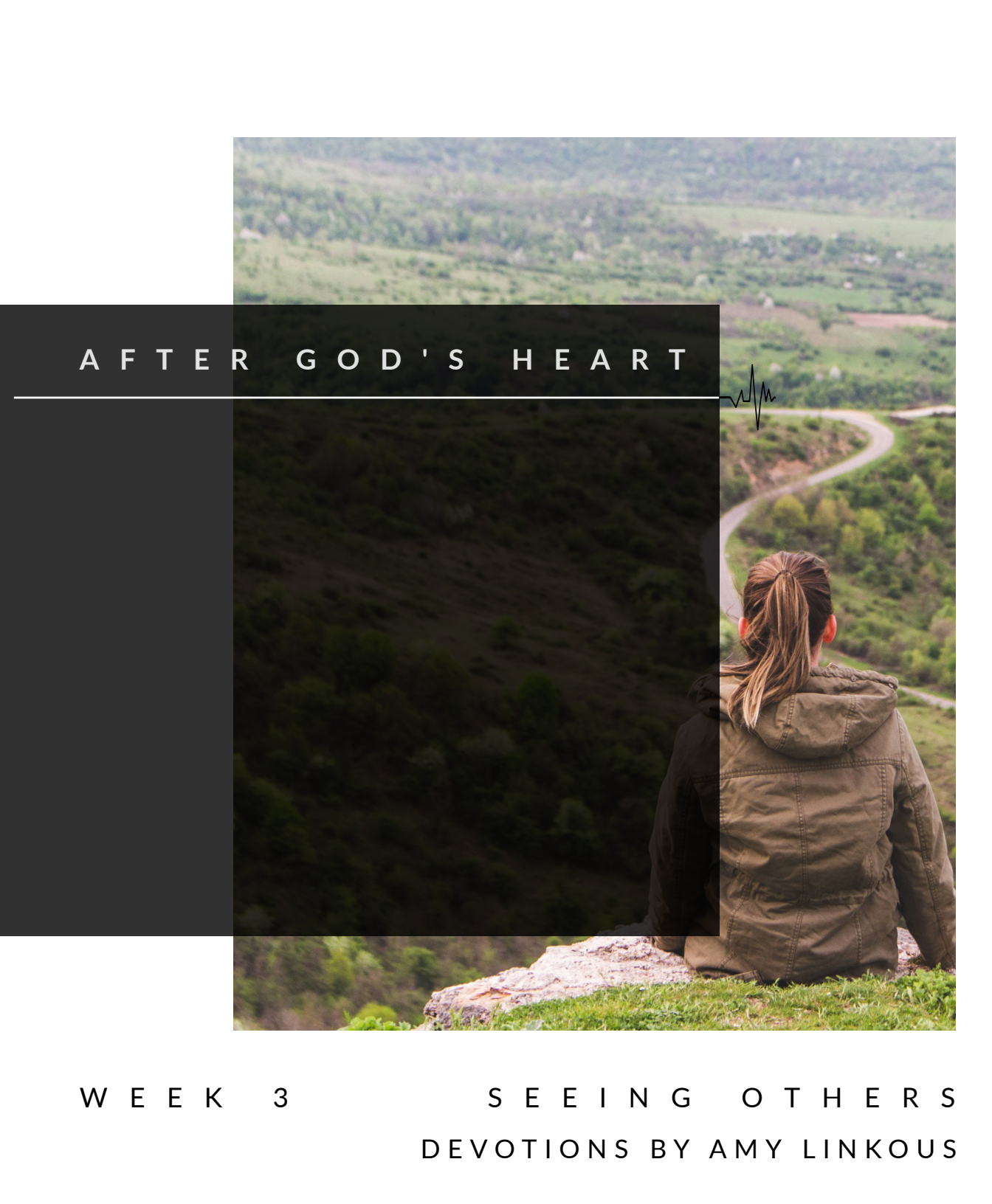
“Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.” Acts 10:15 (NLT)



SEEING

ME



A woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a green jacket, is seen from behind, sitting on a rock and looking out over a vast, green valley. A winding road curves through the landscape. A dark grey vertical bar is on the left, and a white horizontal line with a heartbeat graphic on the right is positioned across the middle of the image. The text 'AFTER GOD'S HEART' is written in white, spaced-out capital letters across the top of the dark bar.

AFTER GOD'S HEART

WEEK 3

SEEING OTHERS
DEVOTIONS BY AMY LINKOUS

WHO WILL GO FOR US DAY 1

“Then I heard the Lord asking, ‘Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?’”
Isaiah 6:8a (NLT)

On June 5, 1990, a headline in the Los Angeles Times read, “Court Lets Religious Clubs Meet in Schools : Ruling: The U.S. Supreme Court decides that high schools that allow extracurricular activities on campus must also permit students to gather for prayer.”

As juniors in high school and armed with knowledge of this court case, my friends David, Amber, and I started a prayer group with no adult help. We met around the flag pole before school each morning and quietly, yet genuinely, poured our hearts out to God in prayer together. Faithful Christian students of all denominations, and some who were just curious, joined in. Attendance grew to about fifty out of a student body of a little over four hundred, and soon the school began to provide a classroom for us to meet.

Changing the fabric of our community, this interdenominational prayer group at Pike County High School ran continuously for more than a decade with no faculty advisor until a chapter of Fellowship of Christian Athletes was birthed. Many of the teens who were saved and filled with the Spirit through the peer-led prayer before school and the off-campus worship services and Bible studies are serving Him today as parents, grandparents, and leaders all over the nation.

The Great Commission: “...Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
Matthew 28:19-20a (NLT)

We can't “hire out” obedience to the King. True obedience is with or without a leader. We students saw the words of the Great Commission and went without a teacher. Obey God and go even when a leader isn't around. Will you go? “There's a crown, and we can win it if we'll go in Jesus' Name.” - Kitty Suffield

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Holy Father, I recognize that I am the one to go into all the world and teach the gospel; no one can do my job for me. Show me ways to share You in a world that is often unkind toward outward expressions of faith. I will use every tool available to reach as many people as I can. I will go. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

“ . . .When I reveal My holiness through you before their very eyes, says the Sovereign Lord, then the nations will know that I am the Lord.” Ezekiel 36:23b (NLT)



BE AVAILABLE DAY 2

“I said, ‘Here I am. Send me.’” Isaiah 6:8b (NLT)

After our last church service, Lisa saw the pain in my eyes and said she would be over to help me several days that week. She showed up at my doorstep after work carrying boxes, newspaper, packing tape, a crockpot full of barbecue, buns, chips, and tea. With a peaceful smile and hardly a question asked, she went for it, packing my kitchen, living room, storage closet, mudroom, and homeschool room. She packed up our life in Georgia, down to the weird drawer with rubber bands & coupons. She knew the move was hard for her pastor’s wife. I couldn’t do it, but Lisa was available.

I stood on the outside looking in at my new life, like a merry-go-round in motion, and I did not know how to jump on. Marie Mewald noticed the newness washing over me as I tried to be strong for my four young kids, already overworked husband and my new church. I was covered in loving people, gifts, and family help, but I still felt alone. She saw me. She invited me to talk, helped me give my emotions words, and became a safe place to share them. She sat with me, in laughter and tears. Marie was available to me often over a period of years.

Keep your heart open and give plenty of margin in your schedule for God to use you to care for others. Look for what God may be doing next. Position yourself to be quick to obey when God calls upon You to share His love. Be available to Him.

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind...[and] Love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 22:37, 39 (NLT)

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Dear Lord, help me notice when others need me to be Your Hands and Your Feet in their lives. Be through me what I cannot be, a reason for people to believe You are love. Show me how to love like You. I am available to You to do whatever You want. Please teach me to be more available. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

“And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of My followers, you will surely be rewarded.” Matthew 10:42 (NLT)



SACRIFICE

DAY 3

“Then I heard the Lord asking, ‘Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?’ I said, ‘Here I am. Send me.’” Isaiah 6:8 (NLT)

I get a lump in my throat remembering the sacrifices we have made as a ministry family. But, God is a big rewarder.

“And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life.” Matthew 19:29 (NLT)

My grandma was a mid-century pastor’s wife in these Appalachian mountains. Long before I knew I’d be a pastor’s wife, I asked what she would change about her more than forty years in the ministry. She spoke of a difficult season when some of their seven kids reached their teen years and ministry demands swelled. Their busy family faced great strain, with ripples of misunderstandings among them. Through it all, they continued pastoring. Someone in the family, sometimes even my grandpa, the pastor, would pick up neighborhood children and bring them to church.

I met Freda for the first time when her grandson, Cameron, became engaged to my oldest daughter, Carey. Upon finding out I was Marvin and Mary Richardson’s granddaughter, her face lit up brightly, and she told of how Grandpa had faithfully picked her and her brother up for church when she was a child, sharing rich stories of that season. I was moved to tears. Here I stood, some sixty-five years later, with my grandparents’ sacrifice now blessing me and my growing family.

My grandparents’ choice to serve God in the midst of their need led to the salvation of Freda and her entire family line. The rewards of obeying God far exceed any losses. He does right by us, giving back to us, truly, one hundred times what we give!

“So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.” Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Holy God, You are painting a heavenly picture that includes me and Your followers to come. Help me obey You even when it demands sacrifice. I trust that You are doing something great even if it is hard. I will serve You all the days of my life and know that You will reward me. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

“Give to others, and you will receive. You will be given much. It will be poured into your hands—more than you can hold. You will be given so much that it will spill into your lap. The way you give to others is the way God will give to you.”

Luke 6:38 (ERV)



LOVE EACH OTHER DAY 4

Jesus' longest prayer ever recorded, John 17, is my favorite chapter in the Bible. Jesus asked God for unity among all who would ever believe; that's us. His heart is revealed as it spills open, and nearly the entire prayer is focused on us, His followers.

"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in Me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as You and I are one—as You are in Me, Father, and I am in You. And may they be in Us so that the world will believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory You gave Me, so they may be one as We are one. I am in them and You are in Me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that You sent Me and that You love them as much as You love Me." -Jesus in John 17:20-23 (NLT)

People will know Jesus is the Messiah when believers are one. Unity among us is Jesus' master plan for world evangelism.

Read these scriptures aloud. Prayerfully write a list of things you need "to do" to support Jesus' desire for unity.

"Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them . . . Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:29, 31-32 (NLT)

"If someone says, 'I love God,' but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?" 1 John 4:20 (NLT)

"Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, 'I will take revenge; I will pay them back,' says the Lord." Romans 12:17-18 (NLT)

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Join Jesus in His prayer for unity by praying John 17:20-23, aloud.

"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)



DAY 5

GOD CARES MORE THAN YOU

“I am the good shepherd; I know My own sheep, and they know Me,” John 10:14 (NLT)

I walked into the sanctuary that Sunday morning before service with my friend Leslae, visiting that day, exhausted after a busy Encounter ministry weekend. Not many people were in the sanctuary, yet; even so, I saw so many faces who needed me. My feelings leaked out, “Oh my goodness! I see so many people who I need to talk to; it’s overwhelming!”

Later in service, during a powerful time of worship, Monica came to me shaking and crying with joy, saying, “The Lord sees them ALL, and He cares for them ALL!” Undeniably, God heard the words I had spoken to Leslae and answered through Monica! God saw how overwhelmed I was in the ministry that day. He wanted me to know that He saw and cared for each person more than I!

“You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD.” Psalm 139:2-4 (NLT)

God assigns people to you to love and help. Maybe the task feels too much for you. Maybe you don’t know where to start or what to say. Moses felt this way, and God answered him in Exodus 33:14, “I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you.”

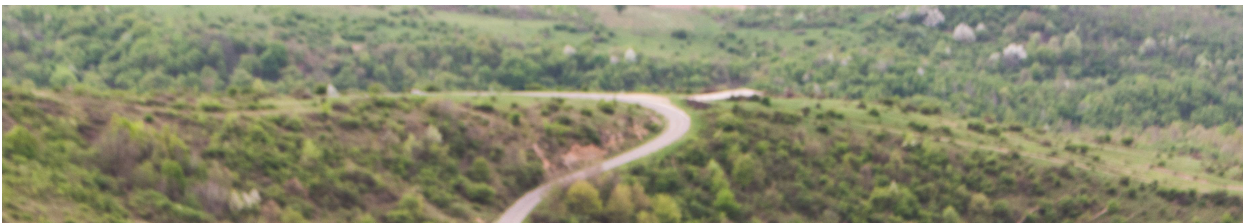
Trust that God cares more for the people He put in your path than you do. He goes with you and reaches their hearts as only He can.

“The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.”
1 Thessalonians 5:24

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father, You see all the people all around me, the ones I can reach and the ones that I cannot. You care for and love them even more than I do. I trust You to go with me and flow through me. Thank You that You are meeting their needs whether You use me to help or not. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them.” Matthew 9:36a (NIV)



PLANTING HOLY SEEDS DAY 6

“Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.” 2 Corinthians 9:10 (NIV)

I love tending to my plants, whether it be pruning Miss Lemón, the lemon tree Pastor Betty gave me, resisting overwatering my white Christmas cactus from Samantha, or gently tying tomato vines to the stake. I feel His presence while gardening: planting seeds or fragile cuttings, supporting fledgling growth, freeing root-bound plants, pruning, and cheering as green begins to sprout.

Just as I nurture my plants, we as His servants are called and used of God to care for the Body of Christ. We carry the seed of Jesus, and we are His “holy seed”, Isaiah 3:13. We plant baby disciples and support ailing ones. God does miracle growth among us, and He uses us as part of the miracle. We learn our skills from Him and get to carry out His purposes. We pour buckets of the water of the Word on parched ground and support one another in storms and times of new, painful growth. He positions us with precision to pray over areas of His harvest that are under attack and to speak His life back into dying people.

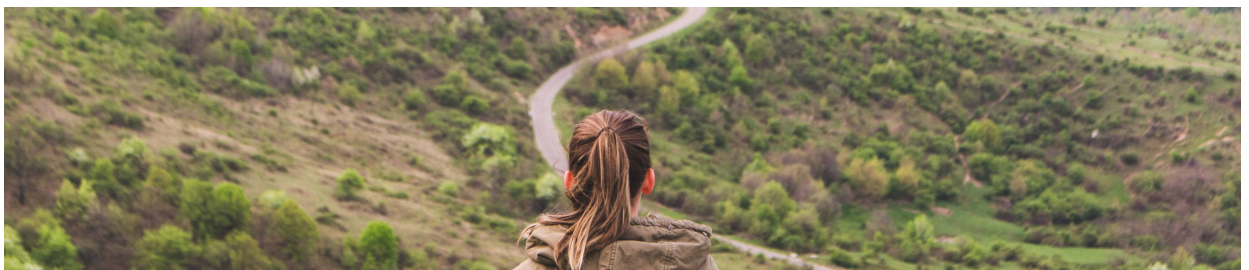
“...I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples.” John 13:34-35 (NLT)

The magnificent display of God Himself, His handiwork shining through our service to Him, testifies of Him by proving to the world that we truly are His children.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Dear Lord, show me how to support Your Kingdom growth in the earth today. Show me how I can help draw the people in my life closer to Your side and support them in their walk with You. Use me to plant Your seed, protect Your seed, and harvest it. In Jesus’ Holy Name, I pray. Amen.

“Truth will spring from the earth like a plant, and justice will look down from the sky. Yes, the Eternal will plant goodness in the earth, and our land will yield great abundance.” Psalm 85:11-12 (The Voice)



HELP OTHERS GROW DAY 7

“When you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble.” I Corinthians 8:12-13 (NLT)

As a little boy, our son Mark was unusually kind and faithful to his friends. Sometimes he was almost too kind, allowing other boys to take advantage of him, like the many times he traded an expensive toy for a dollar store trinket. Other times, Mark’s self-sacrifice spoke volumes, like the time Mark decided to no longer talk about the glory of Lego Batman in Caleb’s presence. In faith, Caleb’s parents didn’t allow him to explore superheroes; Mark respected this. Though the other boys tried to get Mark to play Batman and even made fun of Caleb, Mark stood his ground. He wouldn’t even wear his Batman shirt around Caleb.

Because we are all one body, the things we do and say affect the others in the body. “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.” I Corinthians 12:26-27 (NLT)

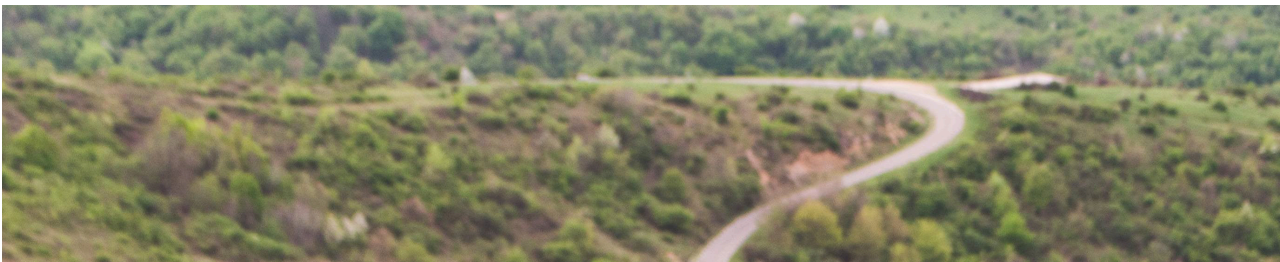
Jesus said, “But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in Me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around your neck.” Mark 9:42 (NLT)

God planted a harvest within your reach. The harvest is watching you. Join Him in caring for it. Do not slice it, strike it or bruise it with actions and words that could keep true faith from thriving and multiplying. Be aware not to hinder a believer’s growth in your home, church, or in public, whether online or in person. There is a “holy seed” to care for inside your fellow believers (Isaiah 6:13).

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Dear Father, forgive me for abusing Your Body through careless actions and words. Help me be a beacon of Your Hope and Faith in a dark world and to support my fellow believers’ growth in the Body of Christ, worldwide. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

“And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed Me.” Genesis 22:18 (NLT)



SEEKING

OTHERS

