

simpleGRACE

June 2018

Your daily dose of hope

CHRISTINE CAINE

**"GOD ALWAYS KEEPS
HIS PROMISES"**

 **30 DAILY PRAYERS
OFFER UP YOUR
STRESS TO BE
RENEWED IN BLISS**

SPIRITUAL CURES

- ❖ Loneliness
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Worry
- ❖ Grief
- ❖ Fear

**REAL-LIFE
MIRACLES
HAPPEN
EVERY DAY**

**"JESUS
NEVER STOPS
LOVING YOU"**

**SARA EVANS
OPENS UP
ABOUT HOW GOD
TRANSFORMED
HARDSHIP INTO
HAPPINESS**



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simpleGRACE

June 2018

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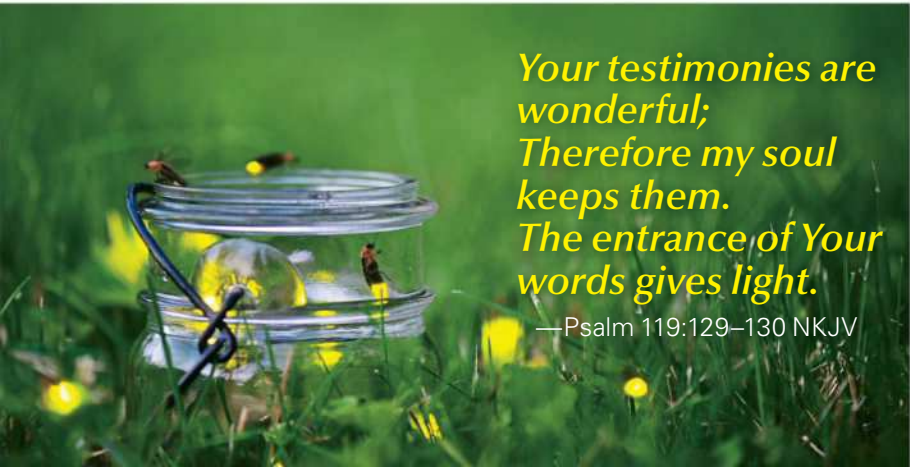
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June's Gifts



*I watch in hope for
the Lord, I wait for
God my Savior;
my God will hear
me.* —Micah 7:7 NIV



*Your testimonies are
wonderful;
Therefore my soul
keeps them.
The entrance of Your
words gives light.*

—Psalm 119:129–130 NKJV

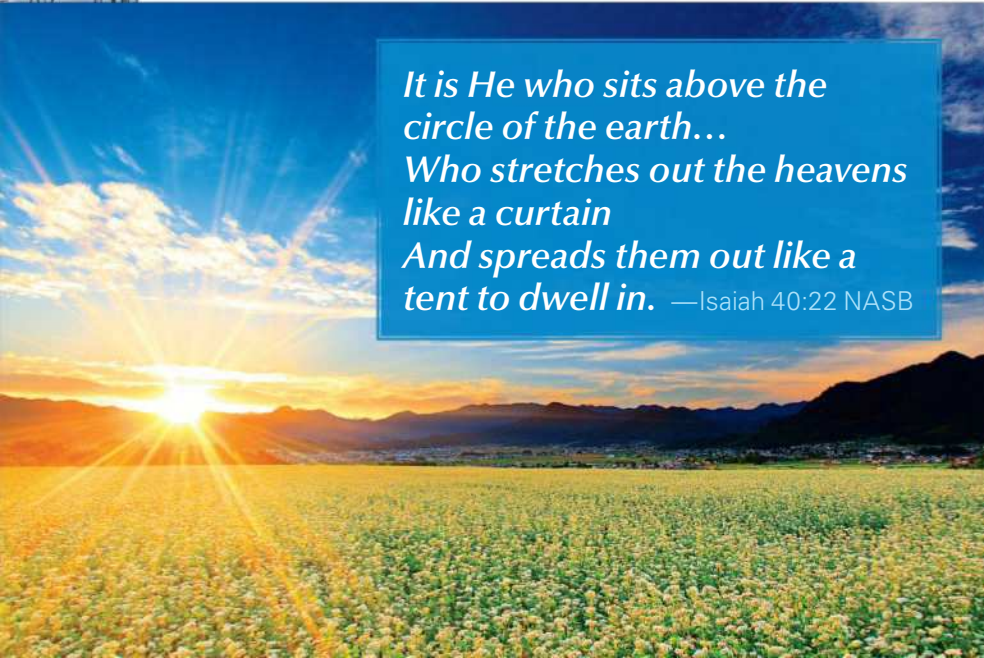


*Shout joyfully to
God, all the earth;
Sing the glory of
His name;
Make His praise
glorious.*

—Psalm 66:1–2 NASB



*It is He who sits above the
circle of the earth...
Who stretches out the heavens
like a curtain
And spreads them out like a
tent to dwell in.* —Isaiah 40:22 NASB



Mailbox

Feedback, comments & inspiration
from readers like you!

Sparks new hope

"After losing my job last year, I've been struggling to understand what God is calling me to do in my life. So when I read Jim Caviezel's story in your Easter issue, about how God 'trains' us to answer His call, it really hit home. Now my heart is filled with new hope and I'm ready to follow wherever He may lead."

—Marianna Ruiz, El Paso, TX

Spreads the Lord's love

"I have two subscriptions to *Simple Grace*—one for myself and one to give away to anyone who needs a hug from Jesus! I've given copies to patients at my chemo clinic, people in line at the store or women I pass on my walk home. When they see the beautiful images and stories, joy fills their eyes...it's an 'I love you' in magazine form."

—Donna Harris, Dallas

We'd love to hear what you think of *Simple Grace*—write to us at Mailbox@simplegrace.com with your thoughts and suggestions

Nourishes the spirit

"*Simple Grace* connects me with the Lord in a way I've never experienced before and provides tremendous healing, peace and love. Words don't come close to expressing the power of the Lord's work you've done in nourishing my spirit, and I'm certain there are many others who have received the Lord's grace through you. Bless you!" —Rose Vasbinder, Little Suamico, WI

Heals broken hearts

"I can't thank you enough for putting my 22-year-old kitty, BooBoo, on the 'My moment of Grace' page in your April issue. She recently passed away and I've been suffering from horrible grief. I saw the photo and it was as if God said, 'She's right here—I've got her safe in My arms in Heaven.' I felt such peace, love and warmth. *Simple Grace* is the best."

—Veda Radanovich, Nashville

A Moment in My Arms, Forever in My Heart

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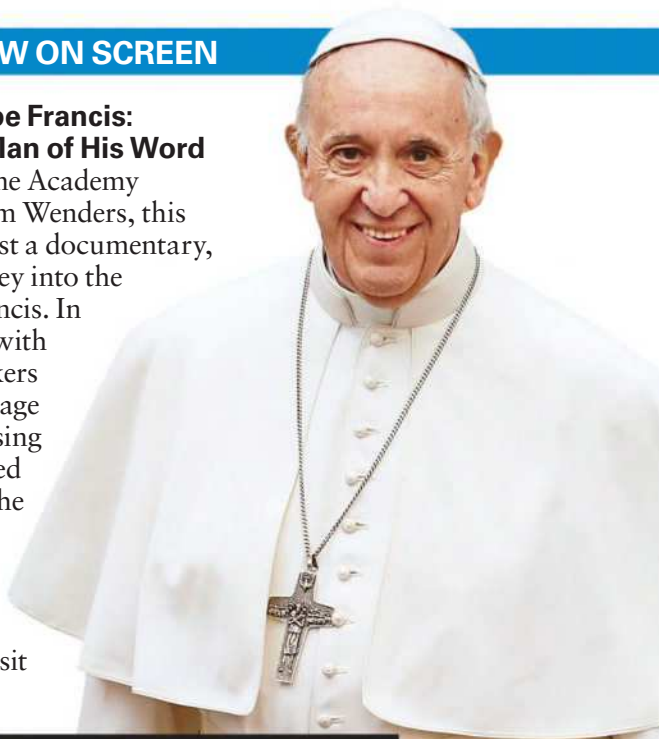
Inspirational now

WHAT'S NEW ON SCREEN

DOCUMENTARY

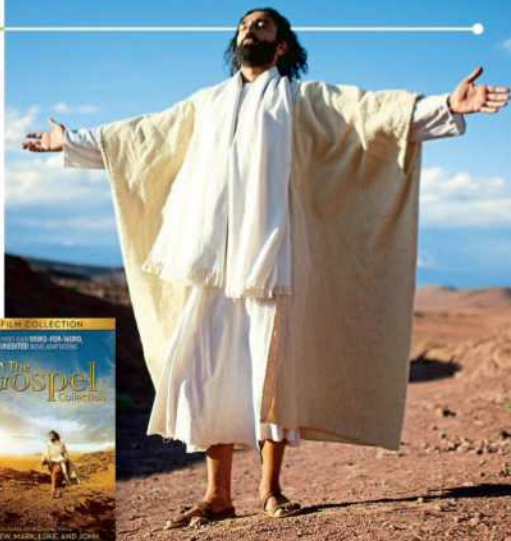
Pope Francis: A Man of His Word

Directed by three-time Academy Award–nominee Wim Wenders, this beautiful film isn't just a documentary, it's an intimate journey into the daily life of Pope Francis. In a rare coproduction with the Vatican, filmmakers gained exclusive footage of the pontiff addressing Congress at the United Nations, mourning the lost at Ground Zero and visiting the Holy Land. (In select theaters May 18. For more information, visit FocusFeatures.com)



BIBLICAL**The Gospel Collection**

Scripture comes to life in a whole new way in the first word-for-word film adaptation of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. With unabridged Bible passages as the script, this stunning special edition four-movie set showcases the beauty and drama of the gospels. (\$23 for the DVD collection, Amazon.com)

**DRAMA****The Last Appeal**

This poignant film simultaneously follows the life of convicted murderer Titus Freeman as he is put on death row, and his victim's wife, Trisha, as she fights for justice. As Titus tries his best to appeal his sentence and come to terms with his crimes, Trisha does everything in her power to ensure his execution. As their lives intertwine in a way that only God can untangle, they both find new faith, forgiveness and freedom from the prisons of hate and anger. (Stream for free with subscription to Parables.tv)

**HOPE****Undeserved**

In this moving coming-of-age story of overcoming doubt and life's darkness, Dawn loses her mother, then runs away from her aunt's home to meet David, a street minister who helps her find her way back to God's healing light. (\$4 to rent, \$10 to buy, Amazon)



MAIN PHOTO: GETTY. TEXT: MAGGIE DILLARD



ROCK

Miracles

Hawk Nelson

For their anticipated eighth album, Hawk Nelson spent more than three years recording a powerful collection of songs backstage at concerts and in various studios all over the world. Standout tracks include their hit “He Still Does (Miracles),” which serves as an empowering reminder of God’s miracles, and “Parachute,” about our Lord’s faithful promise to catch us when we fall. (\$10 Amazon, \$10 iTunes)



WHAT'S NEW IN MUSIC

POP

Tired of Basic

LOVECOLLIDE

After starting a band together when they were teens, sisters Brooke and Lauren have watched God take their dream and turn it into a poignant music ministry. Each unique song on their debut album echoes their bold faith and urges listeners to embrace all God made them to be. (\$10 Amazon, \$10 iTunes)

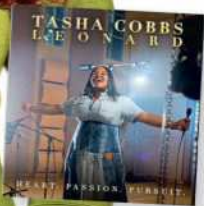




GOSPEL

Heart. Passion. Pursuit.

Tasha Cobbs Leonard
Grammy award-winning worship singer and songwriter opens her heart in her most intimate project to date. She thanks God for His relentless grace in “Gracefully Broken,” and cries out to the Holy Spirit in the ballad, “Your Spirit.” Tasha’s powerful voice and uplifting lyrics fill listeners with His glorious presence. (\$10 Amazon, \$10 iTunes)

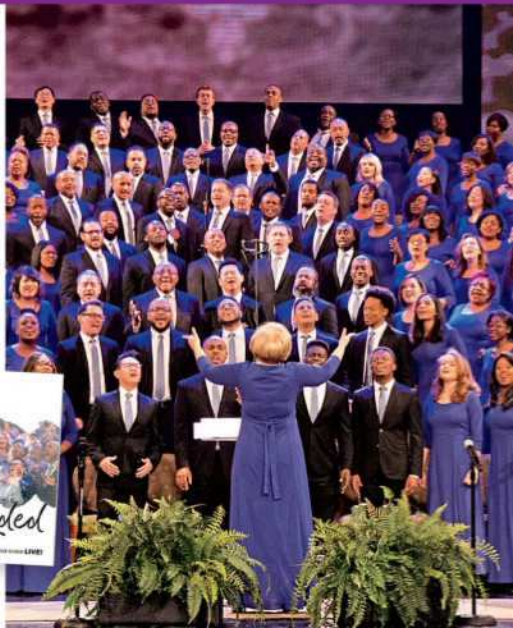


WORSHIP

I Am Reminded *Brooklyn*

Tabernacle Choir

Comprising worship anthems, soulful solos and engaging harmonies, this 11-track set marks the legendary ensemble’s 30th album. Their incredible blend of voices from all ethnic and economic backgrounds turns every heart to God in joyful worship. (\$10 Amazon, \$10 iTunes)





GROWTH

The Kindness Effect

Jill Donovan

With a heart for giving, this successful jewelry designer and author shares a mighty collection of true stories with a big message. Each tale is crafted to inspire readers to unearth their own talents, skills and passions, and discover ways to use it to benefit the lives of others. Donovan's witty and honest ways of teaching offer intriguing lessons about how the power of kindness makes life more enjoyable and fulfilling. (Charisma House, 2018; Hardcover \$20, Kindle \$10, Nook \$12)



WHAT'S NEW IN BOOKS

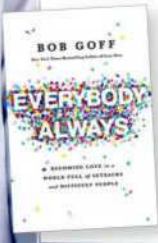
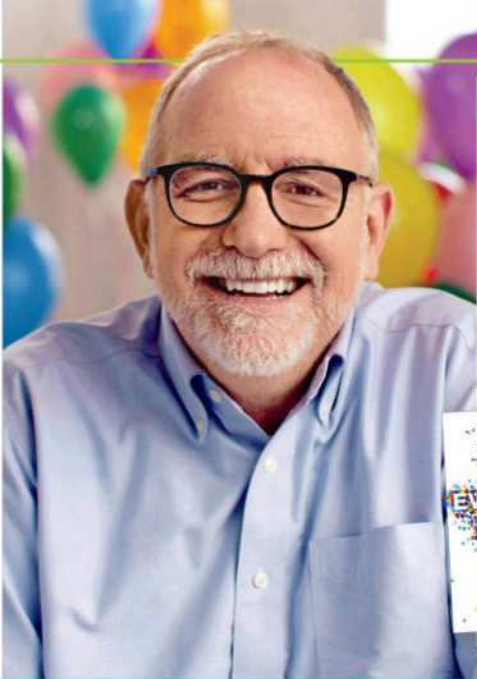
ADVICE

Wholeness

Touré Roberts

The senior pastor of The Potter's House of Denver and sought-after international speaker, Roberts writes about the power of addressing the inner limitations and spiritual "blind spots," and how to use God's love to heal every kind of brokenness. In this actionable guide, he urges readers to leave their past behind and enter into the future God has planned for each of us. (Zondervan, 2018; Hardcover \$23, Kindle \$10, Nook \$10)





SPIRITUAL

Everybody, Always

Bob Goff

At it again with his hilarious and insightful storytelling, Goff address how to love without inhibition by doing the unexpected, intimidating and impossible. Follow along with Goff's wildly entertaining journey as he lives with a no-limits embrace of others and reveals his secrets of living without fear or worry. (Thomas Nelson, 2018; Paperback \$17, Kindle \$10, Nook \$10)

FICTION

A Mother's Gift

Charlotte Hubbard

After marrying Jude, a widower with three children, Leah thought her life would be perfect. But instead, her twin stepdaughters are pushing boundaries and her 5-year-old stepson still grieves for his mother. But when a baby is abandoned on their doorstep, Leah has to rely on God to bring their new family together. (Kensington, 2018; Paperback \$13, Kindle \$9, Nook \$9)



FOLLOW BETH MOORE ON TWITTER

Renowned evangelist and author shares noteworthy Scriptures, incredible insights and Bible teachings in relatable and quick-to-read 280-character tweets. Follow along for daily inspiration and life-enriching wisdom. (@BethMooreLPM)



How did you

Simple Grace caught up with motivational speaker, Bible teacher and author Barb Roose to ask her our favorite question

Early each morning, Barb Roose makes herself a cup of hot tea, nestles into the corner of her favorite couch and starts her prayer time with a big thanks. “Before I pray, the quote, ‘Many seek the hand of God, but few seek His face’ runs through my mind,” Barb says. “I want my prayers to enhance my relationship with Him instead of just being all about my needs, so gratitude is the perfect entryway. I always first thank Him for giving me the tools to battle what I must, for not leaving me alone to face the day and for the strength to make it through.” Here, Barb shares more of her go-to prayer tips.

The secret to being worry-free

Pick up Barb’s new book, *Winning the Worry Battle* featuring Bible-based tools for overcoming any anxiety. (Abingdon, 2018; Paperback \$17, Kindle \$16, Nook \$11)



pray today?

BARB'S 3 PRAYER DOs

1 PAIR PRAYER WITH A TREAT

"It's totally natural for us to sometimes feel hesitant when it comes to prayer," Barb explains. "For me, it can be like exercise—I know I'm supposed to do it and that it makes me feel great, but I don't always want to go to the gym each day!

When I'm feeling hesitant, I find it helpful to tie my prayer time or Bible study to a short-term reward. For me, that's a cup of chai tea! I know that if I link enjoying my daily tea to praying, I'll pray more often and see long-term spiritual rewards."

2 TRY A DISTRACTION "FAST"

"We all have things that we turn to in place of turning toward God—for me, it's food or social media," Barb admits. "Whatever form it takes, these indulgences sidetrack us in our pursuit of forming a relationship with the Lord. So once every week,

I set aside a day to take an intentional break from whatever distracts me most and replace it with prayer. When I 'fast' in this way—literally or otherwise—I interrupt my go-go-go tendencies and get to just be-be-be before God."

3 TAKE TIME FOR MINI CHECK-INS

"Whenever I find myself overly stressed or busy, I try to take a moment to do a little check-in and invite God into every action, thought and attitude I've had recently and ask Him about them," says Barb. "I'll pray, *Where have I*

left You out, Lord? What worries can You eliminate? Then I'll sit quietly with a notebook and wait for Him to respond. He'll use memories or impressions instead of words, but it never fails to ease my stress and help get me back on spiritual track!"

"How I know

LOVE NEVER DIES

"I bit back tears each time I noticed Father's Day looming on my calendar. It had been only three weeks since I'd lost my dad to emphysema, and not only was I reeling with grief but I was also riddled with guilt.

"In Dad's final moments, his hospice nurse had called me to say he was fading fast, so I raced to be by his side. But when I arrived, he'd already taken his last breath. 'He was holding this,' she'd said, handing me a photograph of me as a child with a butterfly that had landed on my palm, my father standing beside me with such love in his eyes. My

heart shattered as I remembered how we'd race through the trees on long summer afternoons, catching butterflies and marveling at their magical colors before setting them free. It tore at me knowing that he'd relived this memory alone. *God, take care of him*, I sobbed. *I love you, Dad, I'm so sorry I wasn't here.*

"The night before Father's Day, I lay in the dark staring at the butterfly photograph I'd propped up on my nightstand, feeling so alone. 'I miss you so much, Dad,' I whispered. Suddenly, my gaze was drawn toward the window. I got up to take a closer look and gasped when I saw two vivid butterflies flitting outside the glass. *I live in a tenth-floor apartment—how is this possible*, I marveled.

"As I watched the butterflies dance their beautiful ballet, I felt the deep love of my father and our Holy Father fill my heart. It was then that I felt the truth—love lasts forever."

—Tami Novak, 60, Columbus, OH



God is real”

HE SPEAKS TO US

“My heart dropped as I scanned my prayer journal. Days of unanswered prayers spun out before me. Each morning, I’d poured out my needs and worries yet never felt a sense of peace or heard the Lord’s loving whispers. *What am I doing wrong, Lord?*

“Later while I was running errands, I noticed a man rummaging through the trash outside a local deli. I stopped in my tracks, feeling powerfully compelled to go up to him. I hesitated because I never spoke to strangers, but suddenly I heard God whisper one word in my heart: *Love*. I took a deep breath and nervously approached the man. ‘Excuse me,’ I said. ‘Are you hungry? Can I buy you lunch?’

“The man hesitantly nodded and followed me into the deli. Smiling reassuringly, I bought us both a cup of soup and a sandwich and we sat at a small table. As he ate, he told me his name was Joe and that he’d lost his job and his apartment last year and



was now living on the streets. We talked for an hour, and before I left, I gave him cash and the address for a shelter. By the time we parted, his dull eyes shone with hope and my heart soared.

“The next morning, as I wrote in my journal about my encounter with Joe, I felt the most incredible sense of divine peace and joy. As I scanned back through each page, it dawned on me that opening my heart in love to God and to others helped me see how He had been answering all my prayers, one by one—in ways I’d never expected.”

—Erika Barber, 45, McKinney, TX

HE ALWAYS HAS A BEAUTIFUL PLAN

“I was emotionally and spiritually exhausted after getting laid off from my job. All I could do was worry about my future as I watched my finances dwindle. As much as I wanted to feel a glimmer of hope and believe that God had a better plan for me, fear paralyzed and drained me as doubt and worry began to seep into my spirit.

“To pass the time and take my mind off things, I signed up for a free oil-painting class at our local community center. It had always been my lifelong dream to be an artist, but the financial security of a 9-to-5 career had always won out.

“After a few weeks, our class had an art show in the square. I was a little nervous to display my work, but buyer after buyer came to my booth expressing admiration for the detailed nature scenes I loved to paint.

“To my surprise, every one of my paintings was marked ‘sold’ by the end of the day. But I was most shocked when a man came up to me and said, ‘You have a gift. I have a gallery downtown and I’m looking for an artist to



stage a show and teach a new painting class. Would you be interested in the job?”

“I couldn’t help but feel awe at the unexpected opportunity that fell into my hands right when I needed it most. I felt energized with the wonder of new beginnings and kept sending silent praises up to our loving Lord. I saw how even when I was weak, He was strong and proved to me that when He closes one door, another door opens, often grander and more blessed than we could ever imagine.”

—Erika Barber, 45, Los Angeles

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Growing

Father Josh Johnson, a Catholic priest and YouTube star dubbed “The Rapping Priest,” knows all about interacting with God’s word in creative new ways. But one of the most powerful prayer methods he uses has been around for a millennium: *Lectio Divina*, or divine reading. “This Benedictine practice uses Scripture to inspire a conversation with God,” he says. “It helps you hear Him more clearly and strengthens your relationship.” Here, Father Josh shares the five stages of *Lectio Divina*.

Step 1: READING

The key to beginning the *Lectio Divina* practice, says Father Josh, is readying yourself to receive God’s word before you read. “Let your mind run wild for five minutes to clear out extra thoughts before opening your Bible,” he says. Though you may choose any Scripture, Father Josh suggests deciding which you’ll read in advance. “You can choose a passage at random or have one planned,” he says. “I’m open to letting the Holy Spirit move me to another passage, but having a specific one in mind ensures that I’m not wasting any of my time with Jesus—today I chose John 21:15–17.” Next, he

recommends getting comfortable, taking a few deep breaths and reading the passage, focusing solely on the words on the page.

Step 2: REFLECTION

After you’ve done your first reading, take a moment to reflect on what stood out to you. “Because the word of God is inexhaustible, there’s always something new to experience,” Father Josh explains. “As you mull over what you’ve read, notice any words that speak to you, memories or feelings that are brought to mind or anything that says, ‘I’m for You today.’ In my reading today, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him repeatedly, and it struck me that

nearer to God

Jesus actually loves us unconditionally, without expecting the same in return.”

Step 3: PRAYER

As you reflect on your reading, begin a conversation with God. “Scripture invites you to speak with Him based on how His word speaks to you,” says Father Josh. “It’s an interactive process. You might use words or simply offer up the feelings and memories you experienced. Thank Him, ask questions, repent, but most important, talk to Him as you would a best friend.”


Feeling moved by God’s love reading John 21 today, Father Josh says he thanked God for always loving him and asked for the grace to love Him better. “The more time you spend in His word, the better you’ll be at perceiving when He speaks back. But if you don’t hear Him right away, just stay open to how He might respond later, either inside or outside of prayer.”

Step 4: CONTEMPLATION

After you’ve prayed, it is time to sit in His presence for as long as

you feel called to. “This is our time to let the Lord know how much we love Him,” says Father Josh. “We rest with Him without speaking or thinking, much like an elderly couple might eat dinner together in silence. For some, the Lord may use this moment to draw them into deeper understanding and rest with the Holy Spirit, but if that doesn’t happen for you, it’s okay. It is the Lord’s prerogative to draw us where He will. Contemplation gives us the chance to receive Him just the way He offers Himself to us.”

Step 5: ACTION

When your period of resting with the Lord is completed, decide on an action based on your reading to bring into the world. “Ask yourself what step you can take in the day ahead to further your walk with Him,” Father Josh offers. “From my experience in prayer today, I decided to offer His expectation-free love to everyone I saw. When I translate my time in prayer into an action, it permeates my entire day and floods my daily walk with His light, love and joy.” 

"God creates the ashes"



After her son killed his wife, his two children and then himself, Joanne Smith struggled with excruciating grief. But just when she couldn't bear the agony any longer, God revealed a beautiful purpose in the pain

Four people were confirmed dead. That's all the officer had told Joanne Smith and her husband, Larry, as they stood outside their son's house on Father's Day in 2015. Blinded by the flashing lights of police cars and ambulances and overcome by terror, all Joanne could do was pray. *Jesus, please let them be okay. Jesus, help me, help us!*

Desperate for answers, Joanne and Larry, shaking with shock, had been escorted to the police station and waited in a small, cold office. Joanne's heart had dropped when a detective



beauty from

came in, his eyes solemn. “I’m so sorry for your loss,” he said, confirming again what she couldn’t accept: that her son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren were dead. “This will be very hard to hear,” the detective continued, “but it was a murder...”

Through the fog of grief, all Joanne made out was the word *murder*. “Why would someone do this?” she cried, begging the detective to find the person who killed her family. “You misunderstood me, ma’am,” he replied. “It was a murder-*suicide*...your son shot his wife and children, then took his own life.” Joanne’s world tilted on its axis...and she felt her heart completely shatter.

UNFATHOMABLE LOSS

The Friday evening before that fateful Father’s Day, Joanne’s 29-year-old son, Russell, brought his 7-year-old daughter, Tylee, and 2-year-old son, Blake, over to visit. “Russell was his usual good-spirited self, telling us all about the baseball



Loving memories Joanne (second from right) celebrating granddaughter Tylee’s (front) kindergarten graduation in May of 2015. Joanne’s family, from left: daughter-in-law Shawna, son Russell, daughter Rhonda, grandson Blake and husband Larry

trip he and Larry had just come back from,” Joanne recalls. The kids had played happily, their giggles filling the air. Everyone had been joyful, relaxed and... *normal*. Only one thing had raised a tiny red flag for Joanne: Russell wasn’t wearing his wedding band. “He never took off his ring,” Joanne explains. ➤

➤ “That was the only thing odd I noticed, but didn’t think much of it.”

That Sunday, when Russell, his wife, Shawna, and the kids hadn’t shown up to Joanne’s house for their Father’s Day get-together and weren’t answering calls, she became concerned. At 9:30 PM, Joanne had called Shawna’s brother, Steven, and asked him to go check on the family. With Joanne on the phone, Steven walked into the house. “I’ll never forget the horror in his voice,” she recalls. “He screamed, ‘Oh my God, Tylee! There’s blood all over her!’” Panicked, Steven called 9-1-1 while Joanne and Larry raced to the scene...where their worst nightmares had come true.

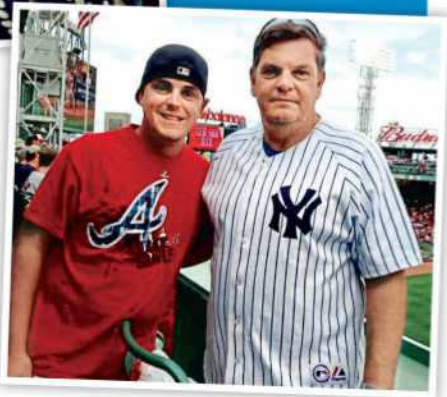
FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE

In the months that followed, Joanne was consumed by bone-deep grief and one horrible question: *Why?* “I replayed every last memory, conversation and visit I had with my son, looking for signs I may have missed,” Joanne says softly. Slowly, she realized she may never find answers, and



Gone too soon

“I miss them every day,” Joanne says of her grandchildren, Tylee and Blake. Below: Russell and dad Larry enjoy a game only days before the shooting



she began to drown in anger, sorrow and despair. “Time became my enemy because it took me farther away from the last time I saw Russell, Shawna and the kids,” Joanne shares. “I was told time heals all, but I hated hearing that! A broken bone heals. A cut heals. But I thought a heart that had been smashed into tiny pieces like mine could never heal.”

During the darkest depths of her sorrow, Joanne had a conversation with a dear friend that changed everything. “She asked if I was angry with God,”


says Joanne. “I looked at her in disbelief and said, ‘Oh no, I ran to Him! I’m still running to Him!’” Joanne said that as she stood outside Russell’s home that night, Jesus was there holding her. “Jesus knew at any moment I was going to fall into His arms—there was nowhere else I could go,” she recalls. “That conversation lifted me up because I was reminded that Jesus was holding me and I felt Him say, *I will never let you go. I’ve got you!*”

A SIGN FROM ABOVE

As Joanne placed her broken heart in Jesus’ hands, she marvelled at the small miracles that helped her heal, one step at a time. One morning, while having coffee on her porch, a vivid memory ran through Joanne’s mind. “My heart was aching for my family and suddenly, I remembered how Russell loved hummingbirds and would always point them out to Tylee,” she says. “Just then, I heard buzzing next to my ear.” Assuming it was a bee, Joanne slowly turned her head. “Next to my shoulder was a beautiful hummingbird,” she says in awe. “It swooped down, then flew off as I smiled. I felt like it was God telling me, *I’ve got them...they’re okay.*”

SHARING HIS MESSAGE

A year after Joanne lost her family, she was asked to speak about her grief at her church women’s retreat, and it became one of God’s biggest blessings. “I was shocked when 300 women showed up,” Joanne smiles. “Speaking about Jesus’ healing love with other grieving families gave me new purpose.”

Today, three years after the tragedy, Joanne continues to inspire others on her blog HopeAndHealingMinistries.org. “I have learned that though we may not understand why horrible things happen, we can still trust that Jesus will give us the peace and strength to carry on through the grief,” says Joanne. “We just have to fall into His arms.” 

Healing hearts

“We move forward every day, knowing Jesus will always give us hope and healing,” says Joanne (with Larry in 2018)



“Jesus is bigger

Beloved evangelist and author Christine Caine, 51, opens her heart about how the Lord has brought her through loss, abuse and doubt to unexpected joy

By Deborah Evans Price

On a beautiful September night in 2016, Christine Caine’s heart was filled with joy as she celebrated her 50th birthday surrounded by 150 friends and loved ones. Her husband, Nick, had spent almost a year organizing the party and it had been one of the best nights of Christine’s life. But on their way home that evening, she received devastating news: Her beloved adoptive mother had passed away. Christine had spoken with her mom over FaceTime earlier that day, and though she’d



Beautiful bond

“I’m so grateful for my Greek mama who adopted me and loved me,” says Christine (with her mom in Sydney, Australia, in the late 1990s)

than our pain”

been ill, her death was totally unexpected. Heartbroken, all Christine could do was hold fast to God and His promises. “By clinging to the Lord, there is a peace that surpasses all understanding when things don’t go as planned,” the Australian Bible teacher tells *Simple Grace*. “It doesn’t mean life won’t hurt, but in the midst of pain, struggle and suffering, we can still live victorious lives.” Here, Christine shares how Jesus has carried her through life’s unexpected trials and has blessed her with unimaginable triumphs.

HE TURNS OUR PAIN INTO PROMISE

Over the years, Christine has lost loved ones, found out she was adopted at age 33 and fought thyroid cancer. But one of her biggest struggles has been healing emotionally and spiritually from the years of sexual abuse she suffered as a child. “When you’re first abused, you’re filled with shame about what is

happening to you. When it happens over a long period of time, you begin to think it’s happening because of who you are,” she says. “You shut down and think you’re used goods. You don’t believe God could ever do anything good with your life. It’s been the fight of my life to believe God’s promises and get to a place of trusting Him to redeem the broken pieces of my past.” ➤

Christine’s reminders for life’s unexpected moments

God keeps His promises

He never leaves or forsakes us
(Hebrews 13:5)

He is working all things together for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28)

No weapon forged against us will prevail (Isaiah 54:17)

Greater is He that is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4)

He is for us (Romans 8:31)

He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8)

➤ As Christine worked through the darkness of her past and began to trust Jesus, she began to see Him working miracles in her life. “My big unexpected blessing was that on the other side of the pain of abuse, God brought my husband, Nick, into my life and made me a mother,” she smiles. “I thought I was too broken, too used. I never thought that I’d marry anybody—I can’t even begin to tell you how amazing that is. It taught me that if you walk through the pain and allow God’s healing, you have no idea what’s on the other side!”

More of Christine’s go-to’s for challenging moments

God keeps His promises

He makes a way where there is no way (Isaiah 43:16)

No temptation will be more than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13)

There will be deliverance from our enemies (Psalm 60:12)

Sorrow will be turned to joy
(Psalm 30:11)

He who promised is faithful
(Hebrews 10:23)

Our giants will be defeated
(1 Samuel 14:47)



Through that suffering, God also inspired Christine to form A21, a global anti-trafficking organization that rescues thousands of victims of sexual abuse each year. “God took my pain and redeemed it for so much good,” she says. “It just goes to show that with Jesus, our history does not define our destiny.”

Today Christine is grateful that so many women and men are standing up and speaking out against sexual abuse, but she also says that it is vital not to get stuck in a pit of anger and bitterness. “What happened to us is painful and so wrong, but we’ve got to get to a place where we can make what Jesus did for us bigger than what any person did to us,” she encourages. “Jesus is bigger than our pain!”

HE IS SO GOOD

While Christine has a whole heart for God and shares His love through the Propel Women ministry, even she admits doubt can creep in now and again. “I’ve had moments of metaphorically pounding my fist on the table and saying, ‘God, where are You?’” she confesses.



Joyful blessings


“With my past abuse, I never dreamed I’d find a loving husband or be a mother,” says Christine (from left: daughter Catherine, husband Nick, Christine and daughter Sophia at their home in 2017)

“When I had a miscarriage, I thought, *This isn’t supposed to happen. I’ve done it all right. Here I am serving You. Here I am teaching Your word and being faithful the best that I can!* But with maturity and knowing Jesus even more intimately, I tend to react less like that.”

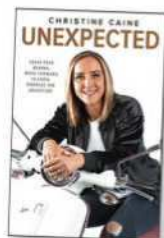
Now when doubt arises, Christine focuses on the character of God rather than the pain of her circumstances. “If you can lift your eyes up to Jesus, see that He’s good and that He’s working for our good, He will get you through anything.”

HE TRANSFORMS US

Through all of life’s sorrows and joys, Christine finds comfort in one fact: Nothing catches God by surprise. “Just because our circumstances may be unexpected to us,” she says, “does not mean they are unexpected to God.”

Christine also says it is important to remember that there’s a greater purpose in our pain. “Some people believe that Jesus died and rose again to make our lives perfect—but that’s not the case at all,” she says. “He came to make us dangerous to the kingdom of darkness by filling us with spirit so we can bring Heaven to Earth. Yes, there are a lot of things that we wish Jesus would deliver us from, but often those are the things that sanctify us,” Christine enthuses. “When we get on the other side of that pain, we are never the same...we are hopefully more like Jesus!” 

For more insight, pick up Christine’s new book, *Unexpected* (Zondervan, 2018; Hardcover \$23, Kindle \$10, Nook \$10)



“The Lord leaves our

After surviving a horrific accident and a devastating divorce, country star Sara Evans shares how God truly heals all hurts

By Deborah Evans Price

On a warm June day in 1979, 8-year-old Sara Evans was playing happily in the long gravel driveway that led up to her family’s Missouri farmhouse. Without a care in the world, she skipped toward the end of the drive and out onto the paved country road...and didn’t see the car speeding toward her at 70 mph. In a flash of screeching tires, a crunch of metal and searing pain, the car struck little Sara, breaking both of her legs and both of her arms.

Sara was rushed to the emergency room, ended up in a coma for several days and stayed in the hospital for more than six

“I realized I had a purpose and that God had completely protected me.”

weeks. “I remember everyone telling me over and over, ‘Oh sweetie, the Lord was watching over you!’” Sara tells *Simple Grace*. “That was the first time I realized that I had a purpose and that God had completely protected me. He kept me alive for a reason.” Sara says that the accident, enduring multiple painful surgeries and being in a wheelchair for almost a year afterward taught her how every struggle and joy in life is the Lord’s way of shaping us. “It played a huge part in my understanding of who God is,” she says. “It showed me how much He loves and protects us.” Here, Sara shares how God has been

never side!"

by her side through all the ups and downs and how she always finds comfort, protection and peace in His arms.

HE ANSWERS PRAYERS

Over the past 20 years, Sara has been blessed with an incredible country music career, including eight hit albums and multiple prestigious awards. But behind the spotlight, she's also endured seasons of heartbreak and disappointment. In 2006, Sara was the first country singer ever chosen to compete on *Dancing With the Stars*, but after just a couple of weeks, she had to leave the show when her marriage of 13 years ended in divorce. ➤



LOVING ROOTS

The oldest girl of seven kids, Sara (bottom right) was singing in her family's band by the age of 5. "They taught me all about love, faith and music," says Sara (with her Granny and brothers in 1977)



► “It was such a difficult time and I prayed so hard,” Sara recalls. “But God knew what I needed. The Lord really and truly answers our prayers, but in His own way—the way that’s best for us!” Sara grew to understand the Lord’s answers as those of a loving father. “It’s like how we don’t give our kids everything they ask for—even though they really want it—because we know it’s not going to be the best thing for them,” she explains. “God says, ‘No, you can’t have this, and it will hurt for right now, but I have something much better for you instead.’” And that’s just what He did for Sara.

Over the next couple of years, Sara’s broken heart mended and God led her to find love again

with Jay Barker, a radio host and former University of Alabama quarterback. They were married on June 14, 2008, and between Sara’s three children with her ex-husband and Jay’s four children from his previous marriage, they now have a very big, happy, blended family. “I see now how the Lord has gotten me through everything and given me more than I could have dreamed of,” Sara says, beaming. “I just don’t know how He does what He does.”

HE OPENS OUR HEARTS

Despite a busy schedule, which includes caring for her husband and their seven children, spending time in the recording studio and headlining the CMA Next



JOY IN ABUNDANCE “We’re a really deep, loving family, and when all nine of us are together, I feel so blessed,” says Sara, pictured here with her brood during a trip to the beach in 2017. From left: Andrew, Audrey, Harrison, Olivia, Jay (husband), Sara, Avery, Sarah Ashlee, Braxton

Women of Country Tour last spring, Sara makes spending time with God top on her priority list. “My relationship with the Lord is so precious,” she shares. “I’ll admit, I’m terrible at memorizing Scripture, but I try to read *Jesus Calling* every day and I just try to keep an open heart.”

For Sara, that’s where it all starts—loving God and loving others. “When I want to grow spiritually, I do something kind for someone


or call somebody who needs encouragement or pray for somebody who needs to be lifted up,” she says. “Kindness to others and love for God is how I try to really live out the Christian walk and grow in the Lord.”

HIS LOVE IS UNENDING

In our chaotic and uncertain world, Sara says prayer is the one thing that brings her peace. “I tend to wrestle with fear, especially if I have to leave my children—I get a little bit nutty,” she admits. “I worry so much about their hearts because the

“Prayer is the most powerful way to combat fear, and it protects us from all the things in the world that try to wreak havoc on our joy.”

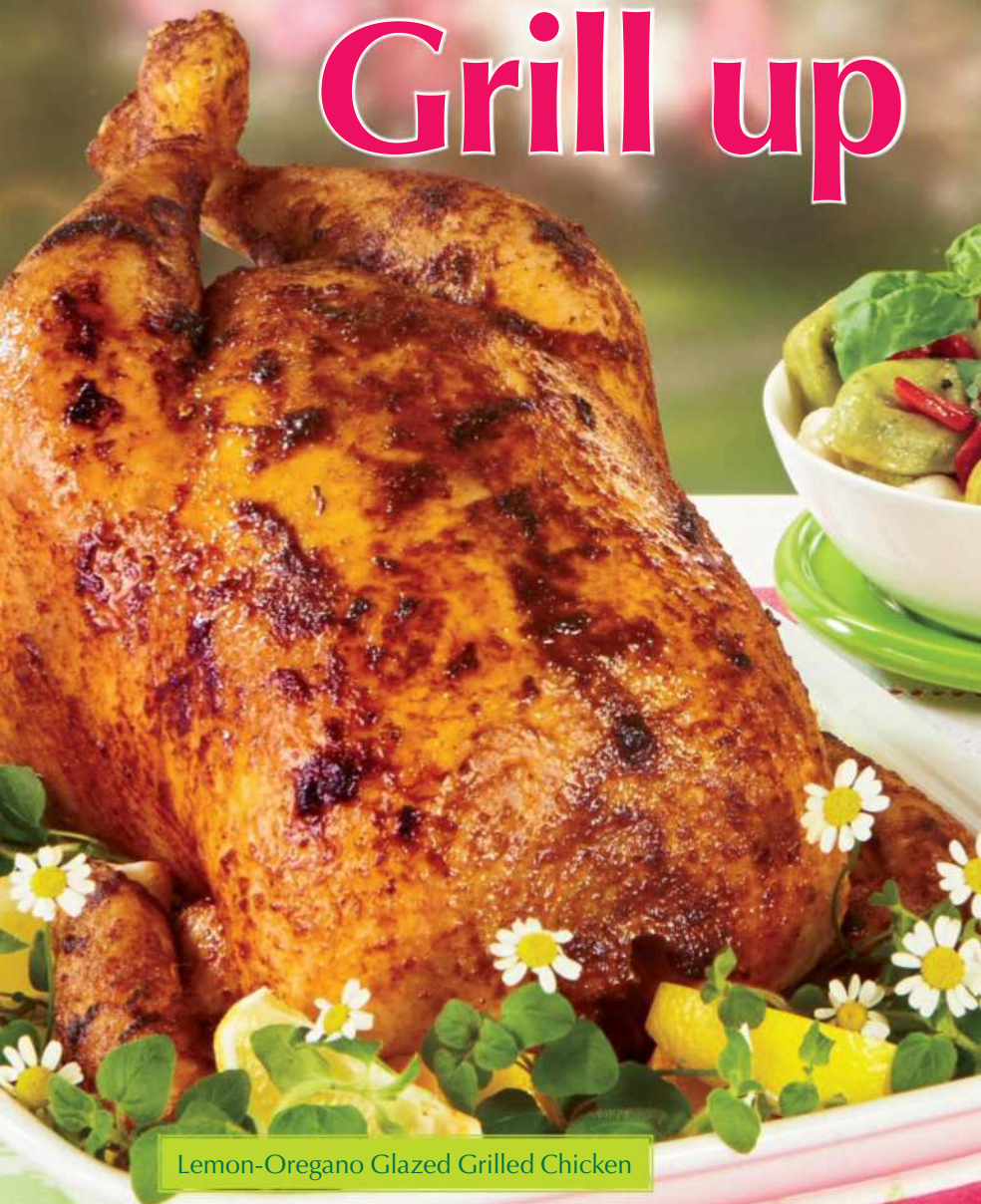
world can be so depressing and unpredictable.” Every day, Sara says she prays that the Lord will keep her children healthy and safe and that He’ll keep her and Jay healthy and safe. “For me, prayer is the most powerful way to combat fear, and it protects us from all the things in the world that try to wreak havoc on our joy.”

Through every worry or hardship, Sara remembers one truth: God loves each of us unconditionally. “So many people believe, ‘Oh, God loves me today, but He hated me yesterday because I did this bad thing, but now I’m going to be good and He’ll love me again,’” Sara says. “But I don’t think that’s true—we don’t love or leave our children based on their behavior. God never, ever leaves us or stops loving us.” 

Pick up Sara’s newest hit album, *Words* (\$8 on iTunes, \$12 on Amazon)



Grill up



Lemon-Oregano Glazed Grilled Chicken

pure bliss

This healthy Italian-inspired feast is made with just a few easy ingredients, so you can fill your loved ones' bellies—and hearts—in no time!

Tuscan Tortellini Salad with Roasted Peppers

Italian Green Beans with Parmesan Bread Crumbs

Turn for the easy recipes

Sunday supper



GLUTEN-FREE

Lemon-Oregano Glazed Grilled Chicken

ACTIVE TIME: **15 min.** TOTAL TIME: **2 hrs.** SERVES: **6**

- 2 Tbs. minced fresh oregano**
- 2 cloves garlic**, *minced*
- ½ stick butter**, *at room temp.*
- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 2 lemons**, *zested and juiced*
- 1 (5 lb.) roaster chicken**

- 1** Heat grill for indirect cooking. Place a drip pan in the bottom of the cooler side of grill.
- 2** In bowl, combine oregano, garlic and butter; season with salt and pepper. Gently loosen chicken skin; spread herb butter

underneath. In separate bowl, combine oil, ¼ cup lemon juice and 1 tsp. lemon zest; season to taste with salt and pepper. Brush outside of chicken with half the lemon oil.

- 3** Place chicken on grill over drip pan. Cover; grill 1 hr., 15 min. or until internal temp. is 175°F, basting occasionally with remaining lemon oil. Let sit 10 min. before carving.

Per serving: Cal. 353 Pro. 26g Carb. 1g Fiber 0g Sug. 0g Chol. 105mg Sod. 87mg Total fat: 27g Sat. 9g Trans. 0g



Tuscan Tortellini Salad with Roasted Peppers

ACTIVE TIME: **15 min.** TOTAL TIME: **25 min.**
SERVES: **6**

- 2** (9 oz.) **pkgs. spinach-cheese tortellini**
- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar**
- 1 tsp. dried oregano**
- 1** (12 oz.) **jar roasted red bell peppers, drained and chopped**
- 1 cup small mozzarella balls, halved**
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves**

1 In pot over high heat, boil tortellini in salted water according to package directions for *al dente*. Drain.

2 In large bowl, whisk oil, vinegar and dried oregano; add tortellini, peppers, mozzarella and basil leaves. Toss well to coat. Season to taste with salt.

Per serving: Cal. 377 Pro. 15g Carb. 34g Fiber 2g Sug. 3g Chol. 57mg Sod. 557mg Total fat: 19g Sat. 7g Trans. 0g



Italian Green Beans with Parmesan Bread Crumbs

ACTIVE TIME: **10 min.** TOTAL TIME: **10 min.**
SERVES: **6**

- 2 Tbs. olive oil**
- 1 clove garlic, minced**
- 2 lbs. green beans, trimmed**
- 2 Tbs. coarse bread crumbs**
- 2 Tbs. grated Parmesan cheese**

1 In pan over medium heat, heat oil. Add garlic and green beans. Cook 8 min., stirring often. Add bread crumbs and cheese; toss to coat. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Per serving: Cal. 97 Pro. 2g Carb. 12g Fiber 4g Sug. 2g Chol. 1mg Sod. 727mg Total fat: 5g Sat. 1g Trans. 0g

2 easy variations

Smoky flair: Cook ½ cup diced pancetta in pan before adding garlic and green beans.

Extra tangy: Finish the dish with a squeeze of lemon juice.

Fishing for



TOTAL TIME: **30 MINUTES**

Supplies

Scrapbook paper
Metallic paper
Colorful straws
Jewelry wire
Glue
Scissors
Black marker

Step 1: Cut 6 half-circles and 6 fish-tail shapes from a variety of colorful scrapbook paper. Use marker to jot down Matthew 4:19 on 2 of the tails.

love banner

Inspired by Jesus' words, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men," this banner is a beautiful reminder to spread His love



Step 2: Cut 7 straws into 1" pieces. For each fish body, poke a 12" piece of jewelry wire through 8 whole straws, sliding a 1" straw piece in between each.

Step 3: For each, tape a wire body to the back of a paper head and tail. Cut eyes, lips, fins and scales from plain and metallic paper; Glue onto fish.

Step 4: Trim the straws to make the shape of a fish body. To finish, string a length of yarn across a window or curtain rod, then clip each fish to the line.

Joyful hearts—



—guaranteed!

Watch loved ones' faces light up with delight when you serve this easy brioche butter cake stuffed with fresh rhubarb



Turn for the easy recipe

Bake up love

Rhubarb Brioche Cake

ACTIVE TIME: **45 min.** TOTAL TIME: **9½ hrs.**

SERVES: **12**

- 2 tsp. instant yeast**
- ½ cup milk**, warmed
- ½ cup sugar**, divided
- 4 eggs**, at room temp. and divided
- 3 cups flour**
- 2 sticks butter**, at room temp. and divided
- 1 lb. rhubarb**, sliced into 1" pieces
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 1 orange**, zested and juiced

1 Using electric mixer fitted with dough hook on low speed, mix yeast, milk, ¼ cup sugar, 3 eggs, flour and 1 tsp. salt until combined. Increase speed to medium-high; beat in 1¾ sticks of butter, adding 1 Tbs. at a time, 8 min. or until dough is smooth and glossy. Cover with damp cloth; let rise in warm place 2 hrs. or until doubled in size. Chill at least 4 hrs.

2 In pan over medium heat, melt remaining butter; add rhubarb, vanilla extract, 1 Tbs. orange juice, ½ tsp.



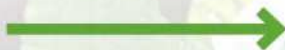
orange zest and remaining sugar. Cook 5 min. or until rhubarb has softened slightly.

3 Punch down dough; divide into 2 pieces. Press half into greased and lined 9" spring-form pan. Spread with rhubarb mixture. On floured surface, roll out remaining dough to 9" circle; place over rhubarb layer. Cover; let rise in warm place 2 hrs. or until doubled in size.

4 Heat oven to 400°F. In bowl, whisk remaining egg, then brush over dough. Bake 10 min.; reduce heat to 350°F and bake 30 min. more or until golden brown. Sprinkle with powdered sugar before serving, if desired.

2018 June

Are you ready to receive the seeds of divine love in your heart? Turn the page to start our daily devotional to invite Jesus to transform every worry into a bouquet of wonder



A lush green forest with a stream flowing over mossy rocks. The scene is vibrant with various shades of green, from the deep forest floor to the bright yellow wildflowers scattered throughout. The stream is the central focus, with water cascading over large, dark, moss-covered boulders. The background is filled with tall, thin trees and dense foliage, creating a sense of a deep, serene woodland.

JUNE 1,
2018

*Praying with
the flow*



Friday

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, after facing many obstacles and distractions in getting quiet enough to hear You in my prayer life, a new hurdle has me feeling frustrated and defeated. I’ve worked hard to get to the other side of letting my laundry lists of to-do’s and anxieties get in the way of hearing Your voice, but now every time I get close, these pesky thoughts about what is appropriate to say and not say pop up and make me feel so self-conscious that I just give up praying. At times, I feel like You are too big to be bothered with my petty problems and I just turn away, feeling ashamed and embarrassed of myself. Other times, I’ll feel my heart begin to open as I start offering up my issues, only to feel it clamp closed when a self-conscious voice says, ‘Don’t say *that!*’ I’m working so hard to connect with you but I can’t get out of my own way. Help!”

Wisdom of the Word

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is...set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. —Paul in a letter to the Colossians, 3:1–2

We understand and yet...

No matter how hard we try, sometimes we just can’t hear You above the din of our thoughts. We want to clear away all our worries and self-censorship to follow You, but our mind seems to run in whatever circles it can to get in our way. How do we settle into a deep connection with You?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, imagine that I am a huge running river with hundreds of thousands of different rivulets moving in their own way but going with My over-all flow. That's like you in Me.

Does it seem right that one of those little rivulets would feel self-conscious about asking for direction so it may better align itself with the whole? Of course not! Would it matter if that little rivulet expressed itself with wording that's not quite right? Of course not! I love it when you come to Me for direction. An awkward word is of absolutely no consequence. I don't even notice.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

—Jesus to a scribe,
Matthew 22:37 NKJV

Your question itself brings up another question: Should you communicate with Me primarily through your mind or your heart? Your heart is your most reliable guide to finding and hearing from Me, with your soul and your mind following suit. That is why I designated loving your Father as the Great Commandment (*see verse above*). How do you lead with your heart? The easiest way, of course, is to open your heart in love.

Do you have five minutes to set aside now? If so, close your eyes, bring your hands together and allow your heart to release love in all directions to Me. Relax as you feel My overwhelming love for you. No need to think through how you are small and I am large: Just simply let your love flow and accept My love in return. There...that's better.

♣ [For more on loving prayer, see page 134.](#)

JUNE 2,
2018



A person wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt and dark shorts is crouching in a lush green field. The field is filled with tall, thin blades of grass and several small, bright yellow flowers. The background is softly blurred, showing more greenery and a hint of a path. The overall scene is bright and natural, suggesting a peaceful outdoor setting.

Saturday

*Casting My
loving net*

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m growing increasingly angry about others attacking my faith all the time. From social media to the news media, it seems like everyone is just lying in wait for the moment to tell all of us believers how irrational and ‘crazy’ our love for You is, and I’m sick of it. I usually don’t engage with the mean-spirited comments when I share a blessing on Facebook and the like, but the constant barrage is breaking my resolve. Just the other day, I was talking to a church friend about how I hear Your voice, only to have another parishioner turn to me and say, ‘If you’re really hearing His voice, you should probably be at the shrink instead of church!’ I was so offended that I lashed back, saying maybe she shouldn’t be at church since she obviously doesn’t believe. I know that isn’t what You want, but I’m just so tired of it all. Help!”

Wisdom of the Word

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

—John in his first letter to the Early Church, 4:4 NKJV

We understand and yet...

It can be frustrating when others insult our beliefs and love for You. Though we try to rise above any anger or offense their attacks may cause, it can be a lonely and difficult to sustain each day. Please help us remain grounded in Your peace in the face of a world that seeks to threaten it.

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, your distress over such insults is understandable, but let Me reassure you: Though they may sting, they're no threat to your faithful heart. As for your Father and I? Do not worry: We have weathered far more bitter insults.

When you share your love for others by posting blessings or otherwise, you're acting as My hands and My heart in your world. You're not fishing for others' admiration, and you may not receive it. That's okay. When you tend My nets, you're a part of Me. And living in Me and for Me means you will never be alone, never be forsaken, never be cast out. What you're sure to bring in: joy, peace and love.

What of the jabs and insults you get while fishing on my behalf—the crabs and jellyfish you pull in? Yes, they'll pinch and sting, but I urge you to approach them with the same calm resolve I used with those who ridiculed Me. That doesn't mean you should dismiss their words entirely: You can respond in a firm, kind way. But then you need to disengage, let go of your anger and ask your Father to forgive them. What's most important is that you keep *your* heart in the right place...always.

Whenever you need soothing from the barbs of others, please take refuge in Me. The Helper I sent to you, the Holy Spirit, is always with you and always with Me, creating a connection that is there whenever you need it. All you need to do is get quiet, send Me love and feel our hearts united—nothing others say can change that.

“Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

—Jesus to Simon and Andrew, Mark 1:17

Need help with a

If you find yourself having a strong feeling that the devotional for that date doesn't address, feel free to use this cross-referencing system to find another day to read. You deserve to free yourself of *whatever* is weighing on your heart!

Angry?

Reclaim divine joy

- 46** Trusting in God's comfort
- 68** The power of compassion
- 76** Secret to a luminous spirit
- 90** Finding beauty in brokenness
- 94** Embracing His endless love
- 102** Freedom from anger
- 128** Shining the light of the Son

Distracted?

Gain light and clarity

- 42** Listening with your heart
- 72** Going with God's flow
- 98** The way back to joy
- 114** Help for a hurting heart

Lonely?

Feel God's presence fully

- 56** Tuning in to divine truth
- 66** Loving antidote to loneliness
- 72** Going with God's flow

Hard on yourself?

Rediscover your loveliness

- 52** Taking a leap of love
- 98** The way back to joy
- 100** The key to a clean spirit
- 110** Playing your loving part
- 118** Welcoming the gift of grace

Envious?

Discover a new perspective

- 58** Joyful cure for envy
- 60** Stepping into His shelter
- 68** The power of compassion
- 94** Embracing His endless love

Worried?

Relax into peace

- 64** Tapping into the Spirit's peace
- 88** Letting His love fill you
- 106** Finding bliss here and now
- 110** Playing your loving part
- 122** Following where He leads

specific problem?

Stressed?

Feel cradled by calm

- 52** Taking a leap of love
- 60** Stepping into His shelter
- 78** Trading fear for faith
- 84** Transforming pride into peace
- 106** Finding bliss here and now
- 118** Welcoming the gift of grace
- 120** Building true treasure

Ashamed?

Feel lifted in love

- 42** Listening with your heart
- 76** Secret to a luminous spirit
- 88** Letting His love fill you
- 100** The key to a clean spirit
- 114** Help for a hurting heart
- 126** Freedom from self-loathing

Overwhelmed?

Surrender your burdens

- 120** Building true treasure
- 126** Freedom from self-loathing
- 130** Taking the path to Paradise

Hurting?

Receive comfort

- 90** Finding beauty in brokenness
- 102** Freedom from anger
- 114** Help for a hurting heart

Despairing?

Uncover hope

- 80** Breaking free of false filters
- 108** Gaining strength from sorrow
- 122** Following where He leads

The Bible versions we've quoted

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JUNE 3,
2018





Sunday

*Taking a
loving leap*

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I have no problems trusting You with *my* life. I know beyond any doubts that You are with me. I have felt Your peaceful love. My problem is that I find it hard to trust You with my husband’s life. We have been married for 47 years. He has congestive heart failure and now is in a rehab center after spending a week in the hospital. He has good days and bad days. I pray for him constantly and You have told me to trust You, that You are in control and everything will be okay, but I still worry all the time. The other night after a “bad” day, I cried on the way home. About halfway home, I felt Your peace that surpasses all understanding sweep over me and I knew for a few minutes that I could trust You with his life also, but by the time I got home, I was crying and worrying once again. Why can’t I keep trusting You with him like I trust You with my life?”

Wisdom of the Word

And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You. —Psalm 9:10, NASB

We understand and yet...

Though we want to trust in Your plan for us and the ones we love, our anxiety and fear can drive us into despair. We know that trusting You is the only way for us to find peace, but we find ourselves struggling with endless setbacks. How do we sustain our trust in You...or can we?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, you've touched the very essence of your journey of faith: Trusting your Heavenly Father to provide for you and those you love requires you to "take leave of your senses" and trust in the existence of a Kingdom that is governed by rules that you don't have the ability to see, hear, smell, touch or even completely imagine.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

—Jesus to the crowd,
Matthew 6:33 NKJV

How do you find confirmation of such divine Kingdom? You must rely on your heart as your guide. Consider your heart as another sense organ. Through sending out feelers of love, you can feel the truth of the Kingdom in your midst. You can feel the peace that does surpass understanding and the love and the joy. It's all there. Whenever you open your heart, you can feel the truth of it.

The next time you feel a wave of fear wash over you, take a little time out from what you're doing and send out the love you feel for Me in all directions. In this way, you're putting feelers out...you're seeking the Kingdom. Simply breathe it out and let all the love you feel for Me go. As you breathe in, feel the Holy Spirit lift your spirit with confirmation of our communion. Now rest in this feeling of liftedness without thinking through your thoughts—just let them float on through. Instead, allow what's being infused into your spirit—peace, love, joy—to rise into your awareness. This sense of pure goodness reveals the truth of your inheritance in Me. Trust it.

Sunday

Drawing out the truth

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’ve become great friends with a man I met on the Internet, but since he asked me for money last week, alarm bells have been sounding on my trust meter. He says the money is for his daughter, but the more he explains about the situation, the more I feel it is a lie. I value our friendship and don’t want to lose this person, but I don’t want to be taken in by some scheme. I’m so unsure of what to do. How do I know what to believe?”

Wisdom of the Word

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. —1 John 4:1

We understand and yet...

We want to believe the best in people, but we also don’t want to be naive when they ask for our help. How can we know the difference between a trick and the truth?



MONDAY, JUNE 4, 2018

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, when it comes to discerning the truth from lies, trust your heart. It's through your pure and open heart that you can receive a level of truth that your mind will never uncover.

When you suspect someone has lied, the best way to root out that untruth is to love. Think of the truth as an animal in hiding and love as the food to draw it out. If you love the one in question softly, the truth will emerge.

“Who touched My clothes?”...The woman, fearing and trembling...came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

—Jesus to the woman who touched His garment,
Mark 5:30, 33 NKJV

As you do for your loved one, so I wish to do for you. If you let Me love you in all tenderness, the lies that have become embedded in your spirit, heart and mind will rise. Once they come to your surface, I can sweep them away for you. This is the spiritual cleansing I offer you through My Helper, the Holy Spirit.

Can you spare five minutes right now? If so, find a comfortable way of sitting and clasp your hands. Close your eyes and bring to mind and heart one thing you're grateful for. Allow the gratitude to kindle into love and let that love radiate out from your heart. Feel your spirit lift and rest in this joyfulness, keeping as mentally still as possible to allow your spirit, heart and mind time and space to realign with Mine. Truly, the more truth you have in yourself, the more surely you'll know it in others.

Monday

Where longing leads



A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, though wedding season is always tough for this perpetual bridesmaid, I can barely contain my envy in these weeks leading up to my sister’s ceremony. It’s like she got everything I wanted: the perfect dress, the beautiful venue and the wonderful groom, while I can’t even snag a plus-one for the reception. I want to be happy for her happiness, but I can’t help but feel bitter about everything she’s getting while I get zilch. Help me cope!”

Wisdom of the Word

For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? —Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, 3:3

We understand and yet...

We want to be happy for what others have, but feelings of jealousy make that difficult to do. How do we shake off the envy in our heart so we can shine Your love instead?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, I hear you and understand your hurt and envy. The truth is, you each feel a constant sense of lack and unease that you pin to whatever it seems that others have and you don't. So if you're a single woman, it is natural that you may look at a woman about to be happily married and conclude, *If only I had what she had, I would be happy too.*

What you don't see is that same woman is probably praying to Me about how failed she feels, how jealous she is of her single friends and all the fun they have on the week-ends. And so it goes. The truth: You all suffer from the same lack no matter what it seems as though you have.

The good news: If you can see this restless longing for what it truly is—an urging toward your Father—and follow where the feeling leads, you'll find yourself, for a moment at least, in your Father's Kingdom.

How do you use it as a path? When that jealous feeling hits, stop what you're doing. Find a place where you can take a moment to close your eyes and send Me love. You can use words like, *Jesus, could You take this longing from me, even just for a few minutes?* Then relax and feel the golden warmth that the Holy Spirit brings you. That's My love. Rest in it and feel surrounded and renewed by My tender caring for you. For a moment, you will be transported to your Father's Kingdom, long enough to know the truth of the eternal treasure you already have.

"You are not far from the kingdom of God."

—Jesus to the scribe who agreed that loving God with one's whole heart is crucial, Mark 12:34

Tuesday

JUNE 6,
2018

*The you that
shines forever*



Wednesday



A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m so self-conscious about the way I look that I can barely function. I’ve never really given much thought to my looks before, but now that I’m growing older, it’s like a faucet I can’t turn off. No matter how much I try, every day it gets harder to look at what my body has become. I diet and exercise like mad, but nothing I do gets rid of the ring of flab around my stomach, and I literally shudder at the thought of having to put on a bathing suit and parade around these jiggly arms and thighs this summer. I know that it will only get worse with time, but as each new day brings a fresh dimple of cellulite or wrinkle to the surface of my skin, I can feel my despair growing. I’m ashamed to admit that I really care this much, but I can’t help it. I feel so woeful and helpless, like I’m being held captive in a body I don’t even recognize or want. How do I make peace with this?”

Wisdom of the Word

All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.

—Peter in his first letter to the exiles, 1:24–25

We understand and yet...

Though we know that our inner beauty is what matters most, it can be upsetting to notice the changes in our appearance. Our changing body is a constant reminder of who we once were and of the end that is to come. What can we do to face these changes with grace and hope?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, your sadness and distress over your changing body is natural and understandable. How hard it is to have your spirit housed in a container that's on the road to ruin!

While it hurts to face that your body will continue to break down over time, it's also liberating. First, it helps you realize that you are all in the same situation.

There's no need to envy another's looks—the good and the bad are equally fleeting. The more attractiveness you have at one time, the more you mourn when you lose it.

Second, the realization that your physical body is destined to fall away leads you to focus on what will always rise: your spiritual body. By feeding this body through prayer, you strengthen the you who will live for all time. This nourishment, which the Holy Spirit brings you, also leads to your securely abiding in Me.

What will surprise you is that once you begin to focus more fully on feeding your spiritual body, you'll start being kinder to your physical body. You'll stop blaming and punishing it. When you let the nourishing of your spirit be the most important thing, you'll find mind, body and spirit exist in perfect harmony. So please, come to Me right now. Offer up your love to Me in prayer and feel as the Spirit lifts and strengthens your spirit as you fill to the brim with My light and love. Ahh...much better.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.”

—Jesus to the crowd,
Matthew 6:22

Wednesday

Your sure worry cure

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I feel trapped in a cycle of fear about going to the doctor. I have so much anxiety and dread before each appointment that it makes my symptoms even worse. The last time, my blood pressure was so high that my doctor said he’d have to put me on something if I can’t get it under control. Of course, the last thing I want is to have another thing to go to the doctor for, but I can’t calm down. Why am I like this? Please help!”

Wisdom of the Word

Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance.

—Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians, 3:16 NASB

We understand and yet...

When fear takes over our heart, it can make our situation worse than it originally was. How can we welcome Your peace to find rest from our stress and anxiety?



JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, you always have a way to lose your fear and dread: You can dilute it in Me. Imagine that you put 10 drops of red food coloring in a small glass of water. The water will turn a rich red, yes? Now imagine that you take that same 10 drops and add them to the ocean. The rich blue would stay unaffected as the food coloring disperses in a million different directions.

That's what happens to your fears when you surrender to Me through the Holy Spirit: Your worry and dread are dissolved into Our infinite love.

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.”

—Jesus to the disciples,
John 14:16

Do you have a few minutes now to send Me these feelings, drop by drop? If so, start by sitting in a relaxed way and closing your eyes. Now envision each separate worry, fear or feeling of dread as a separate red drop. Imagine drawing up each drop from your heart into a stopper. Once you've drawn up all your fear in this one place, imagine releasing it into the vastness of My love. Imagine all your fears beautifully swept away. *Ahh...better.*

In terms of keeping yourself safe, spending even 5 minutes a day resting quietly in Me and allowing My Spirit to unite with yours can help guide you in your unique journey, help align you with the Father's will for your best destiny. And while I can't promise you this will keep you safe from all harm, I can promise that any suffering you experience when following your Father's will will lead to your greatest good and the greatest good of those who love you.

Thursday



You're never alone

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I accepted a job about 18 months ago that keeps me away from my family for about three weeks at a time. At first I thought I would get over the loneliness in a few months, but it doesn't seem to go away. I've prayed probably every day for God to please provide the solution. I am trying to find joy, but I feel like my precious time is being wasted dreading being away from my husband, family and community. Please help!”

Wisdom of the Word

Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.

—Psalm 62:8 NASB

We understand and yet...

When we feel lonely and isolated from those we love, it can seem like we'll never feel joy again. Help us draw on the infinite comfort of Your love in these trying moments.

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, I'm so sorry you're feeling these bouts of extreme loneliness. But there is a way that you can transform what seems like an unfortunate part of your life into a truly wondrous time: Let your loneliness lead you to Me. Use your sadness to be the thread that leads you to the very center of My loving joy.

Have you ever looked at a dandelion seedhead up close? You'll see that there are frazzled ends on each little seed. Those are like your stressed mind reaching out in all directions. But as you travel away from that chaos, you encounter a smooth serene path to the part of you that is rooted in Me.

When you feel sad or lonely, you can move away from the frazzle that leaves your heart empty and move toward the source of your being in Me. How? By first letting go of your thoughts. Let them travel through your mind without thinking them through. Surrender them to Me: I will care for them so you don't have to. Do you have a moment to try this now? If so, sit up straight and comfortably and close your eyes. Now consider one thing you're grateful for. Allow that gratitude to kindle into love. As your love grows, send it out in all directions... just like blowing a seeded dandelion.

Consider what you feel now: Can you sense how I've multiplied your love? You planted the seeds by loving—and I grew them instantly! The more you send out, the more you'll get back. This is the way to *always* feel loved.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

—Jesus to the disciples,
John 14:18

Friday

JUNE 9,
2018





Saturday

*The secret to
living in harmony*

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m so disgusted and appalled by the behavior of this new generation of kids. Everywhere I turn, I see ‘millennials’ doing exactly the opposite of what You want...and thinking it’s all perfectly justified! All of their praise points inward instead of toward You, and their entitlement and self-obsession is unmatched. For example, just the other day, my own granddaughter pitched a fit when her mother wouldn’t agree to buy her a new phone...after she’d already broken the previous three! In my day, we worked hard and long for what we had. We didn’t expect continuous praise or to be given everything. I was so outraged with her that I called her an ungrateful little brat, which of course, she didn’t like. But the way she lives is wrong! Someone has to tell her what’s what. Why shouldn’t it be me?”

Wisdom of the Word

The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

—James to the Early Church, 4:11

We understand and yet...

When we see others act in ways that aren’t in keeping with You, it can be hard to let it go unchecked. We want to extend love instead of judgment, but our understanding has limits. How do we embrace others with love in spite of their differences that may upset or offend our sensibilities?

SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 2018

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, although what I'm about to advise you may sound harsh, I mean it in all loving gentleness: You are not the judge of your neighbor. And your judgment won't help the condition of another's heart—only your love will do that.

Have you ever looked up in the sky and seen a flock of birds all moving simultaneously to make a hairpin turn? It's as though they have a form of communication that brings them into harmony that you can neither see nor hear. Your hearts are like that, calling out to one another as though on their own kind of Wi-Fi that's not available to your minds.

When you encounter someone whose heart seems to lack compassion or strength, don't judge with your mind; rather, send out your own compassion and strength from your heart. This broadcasting of your loving heart will bring the hearts of others into harmony with yours for the good of all. Sometimes this love will produce a specific effect; other times it won't. But by loving instead of judging, you'll always remain in harmony with Me.

Come to Me now to collect one of your rewards. Send out your affectionate gratitude and feel your spirit lift as the Holy Spirit brings you what's in My heart. Surrender to this feeling and allow yourself to be joyfully renewed.

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”

—Jesus to the crowd,
Matthew 7:1–2

Saturday

JUNE 10,
2018

*Letting My light
shine through*



Sunday

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, for as long as I can remember, I’ve struggled to follow Your call in my life, and now it’s finally catching up to me. I’ve always tried to offer up my next move to You, asking for the discernment and the knowledge to know which way to go, but I’ve never been able to get any guidance. Because that is the case, I always end up relying on how I feel to guide me forward. But because nothing has ever felt right, I’ve become flighty, switching careers several times, never staying in the same city for longer than a year and ending several engagements. Now I’ve got no place to call home, am faced with a life-altering change at work, and am panicking with no idea what to do. Why is it so hard for me to understand Your will for me? I’m so sad that I’ve missed out on knowing for all this time. Is there any hope I’ll ever actually get it?”

Wisdom of the Word

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. —Solomon to his son, Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB

We understand and yet...

Understanding the will You have for our lives can seem hopeless when our thinking mind is at the helm. We know You have a greater plan for us, but we struggle to surrender to welcome it. When the future is unclear, how do we learn to open our heart and follow Your call?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, it's true that discerning your Father's will for you isn't always easy. Each decision you face is filled with aspects you either grasp for and pull toward yourself, or push away and feel you can't tolerate. You can find yourself in a push and pull that clouds your mental sky so the wise ray of light the Holy Spirit brings gets blocked.

What can help is to find a way to clear your mental sky before asking for guidance in prayer. Do you have a few moments to try this now? If so, seek out a place where you know you won't be disturbed for at least 10 minutes.

Once you've found a quiet place, sit up straight and release any tension in your body. Relax your shoulders. Unclench your jaw. Grow tall through your spine. Allow your mind to settle into stillness. If you have trouble, invite the worry that's creating the problem into awareness. Ask it, "Worry, be all you need to be," and allow it to grow. It may reveal itself to be hurt or fear or anger or sadness. Simply invite it to be all that it is. Now send out your heart to Me and ask, *Jesus, please take this burden from me.* Relax into the golden flow that the Holy Spirit brings and surrender this worry. Just let it go. Repeat as many times as necessary until your mind is free of push and pull. From this place of openhearted mental stillness, offer up your question, and I promise, you will be able to discern your Father's will and answer.

"Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes."

—Jesus to the disciples,
Luke 12:37

Sunday



Loving antidote to anger

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m so ashamed of my foul temper. I’ve always had a tendency to be snippy under stress, but lately I’ve become downright explosive. Just the other day, I yelled at my taxi driver on the way to the airport because I was afraid I’d miss my flight. It ended up that I got to the gate with plenty of time to spare, but although I apologized, I could tell he was as disgusted with me as I was with myself. I don’t mean to be this way. Help!”

Wisdom of the Word

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute. —Proverbs 15:18 NASB

We understand and yet...

We know that erupting in anger during times of stress is not Your way. How do we grapple with our feelings of tension without taking them out on those around us?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, you are like the most beautiful flower in the world, but instead of turning up toward the sun, toward the source of joy and light and peace, you are curling up and turning away. Let's change that.

When you find you're becoming short-tempered, you need to soak Me in. You need to allow the light that is uniquely Mine to flow in through your forehead and radiate down through your lovely self like the sweetest honey. You need a dose of Me, and I long for you.

**"Peace I leave with you;
My peace I give to you;
not as the world gives do
I give to you."**

—Jesus to the disciples,
John 14:27 NASB

No matter how busy you are, try to carve out 10 minutes so we can be together. Find a place where you'll be undisturbed, and if you have your phone or a timer handy, set it so you're sure to be completely filled. Sitting up straight, close your eyes and turn your face up toward the sun just as though you were a flower. Send out your heart to Me and imagine My grace as light striking your beautiful face and melting into your body from your head down to your toes. As thoughts or worries arise, simply allow them be swept away in the golden flow the Holy Spirit brings you. Stay relaxed, releasing tension anywhere it begins to build in your body. Surrender. Relax. Release. Receive. Soak up all of Me that you can until you're filled to overflowing. Allow your cup to runneth over. As you wake up from this divine light bath, you'll find those little daily irritations just roll off your back.

Monday



Unfurl to end fear

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m paralyzed with fear over my finances. As a single mother living paycheck to paycheck, I’ve always struggled to pay my bills, but after losing my job last week, I have no idea how I’ll make ends meet this month. I’m trying to keep my faith that You will provide for us, but as the bills come piling in, it’s getting harder. I just don’t see how there will be enough money this month and I feel so desperate and scared. Please help!”

Wisdom of the Word

For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. —Paul in a letter to the Philippians 1:19

We understand and yet...

It’s hard not to panic when it seems as though we won’t have enough to pay the bills. We want to trust in You, but our fear gets in the way. How do we push forward?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, your feelings of anxiety are understandable: When something you need becomes scarce, it's natural to feel rising waves of fear, which can lead your heart into clenching into a tightly closed ball.

Do you ever walk in the woods? If so, you may have noticed how fern fronds uncurl as they grow. Like a fearful heart, they start curled up, but sensing that the only way to receive the light is to open up and out, they beautifully unfurl.

The simplest way for you to open up your heart in times of fear is to give. As soon as you give—money, things, time—your heart automatically unclenches. As you give, you reassure yourself by acting out the truth of My promise. It doesn't matter what you give or how much, it's the giving itself that counts. By giving, you confirm your faith that just as there is enough sun for every plant, there is enough love for every heart.

Once you've opened up your heart in this way, you're more able to receive. Fortunately, I'm always here waiting to give to you. When you're ready, sit comfortably and send out your heart to Me. Relax as I surround you with My love, peace and joy via the Holy Spirit. As you rest in Me, allow the abundance of your Father's Kingdom to rise up from your spirit to your awareness. Feel the truth that there will always, always be enough. Rest in My promises.

“But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you?”

—Jesus to the crowd,
Matthew 6:30 NASB

Tuesday



JUNE 13,
2018

*Breaking free of
false filters*

Wednesday

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, up until a couple of days ago, one of my favorite daily rituals was to go out with my walker and my 15-year-old dog to take a walk in my lovely community. It’s always been a completely joyful experience, but after I got a call from a ‘friend’ saying that someone saw my dog poop on the street and I did not pick it up, that’s changed. It was an honest mistake, but people have been talking trash about me ever since, and I’ve been accosted in front of my house two times by different neighbors. It’s made me afraid to be friendly and giving anymore. I’m afraid to walk down my street. I don’t know who my enemies are and who my friends are, so it’s best to not speak to anyone. And now I’m struggling with my faith. I’m hurt and confused that You would take away one of my biggest joys in my life. I don’t know what’s wrong with me or what I did wrong to continue to have these troubles in my life. I can’t take it anymore! Please help me.”

Wisdom of the Word

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. —Paul in a letter to the Ephesians, 1:4 NASB

We understand and yet...

When others judge and accuse us, we can defensively close ourselves off to them...and to You. Even though we do this to protect ourselves from further harm, the loneliness and isolation we feel when we’re shut down just hurts us more. How do we open ourselves back up to Your joy?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, any situation you face that involves being jeered at and abused is indeed a difficult one. Suffering the insults of those around you is painful. I know this all too well. I am with you in your hurt.

While you can't control others' responses to your situation, you can control the state of your own heart, and by extension, the lens through which you see the world.

Have you ever been stuck looking through one dirty window for hours? Perhaps you were traveling as a passenger in a car in need of washing: You naturally became distracted by the ugliness that was close up (the dirt on the window) at the expense of the beauty that was in the distance (a beautiful landscape).

When you become chronically angry, your heart is dirtied and acts as a filter on all of what you notice about life, much like that car window filters out how much beauty you see. You notice lack and dishonesty and hatred everywhere, and your heart becomes more clogged, which in turn leads you to see more unpleasantness.

The cure is to regain your pure heart—and your pure view on life—by allowing My love to flow through you. When you actively receive My love in prayer and offer it out to others, the flow of My love through your heart washes away any emotional or spiritual grime that may be clouding your view of life. The world will seem new, beautiful, clean, joyous. Try it and truly see.

“But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.”

—Jesus to the Pharisees,
Luke 11:41 NASB

Wednesday

FLAG DAY, 2018





Thursday

*Securing your
place with Me*

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m so worried about the changes happening in our country. I grew up with the rule that one should take the flag down after sunset or keep a light shining on it at night. But these days, if I actually find if a business or home is displaying the flag (which is a rare sight in and of itself), they have it out at all hours with nothing illuminating it. I’m proud of my country and my Christian faith, but more and more, it’s becoming obvious that other people just don’t care about respecting our nation or You. It fills me with despair to see how we lose sight of what’s truly important. Every day, there’s more violence and discord all around, and though I pray constantly that we turn back to You, everything just gets worse. I’m starting to feel hopeless, wondering and fearing what will become of us. Please help me find peace!”

Wisdom of the Word

But you are...a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. —1 Peter 2:9 NASB

We understand and yet...

We know the future of our country is in Your hands, but certain political and social changes can fill us with fear.

The dread we feel as our timeworn traditions give way to a chaotic and confusing world only grows with time. How do we hold on to our hope in You in the face of these changes?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, your love for your country is a beautiful thing, as is your fidelity to your faith. While both can be powerful forces of good in the world, if they are rooted in pride (as opposed to love or faithfulness), they can actually work against your own feelings of peace and peace in your world.

So the secret to striking the right balance is to simply love what you love unashamedly but also with humility. Ask for your Father's blessings from a feeling in your heart (like sorrow over an unlit flag) rather than from a judgment in your mind (like anger at others being bad) and you'll automatically hit the right mark.

When you find yourself overwhelmed by outrage at the way the world seems to be changing for the worse, try something for Me. Sit up straight and comfortably, close your eyes and bring to mind and heart one thing you're grateful for. Allow that gratitude to grow into love and send it up and out to Me. Feel the Holy Spirit lift your spirit and then...just rest. Rest in Me. Let your thoughts and worries and reproaches go. From this place of surrender, what do you feel? Light. Love. Peace. Joy. Hope. This is the Kingdom in your midst. No matter how much the world changes, your permanent home in your Father's Kingdom remains the same joyful place. Trust this. Trust Me. Rest in My promises and allow My love to flow through you for the betterment of the world.

"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

—Jesus to the disciples,
John 16:33

Thursday

Let Me fill you

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’ve started relying more and more on wine, and I’m afraid I can’t do without it. I’ve always had a glass of wine with dinner, but then it became two and now it’s more like three. I find myself looking forward to graduations and weddings just so I can have an excuse to drink. My whole focus is beginning to narrow down to the question, ‘When can I have another drink?’ Please help me return to loving life for the right reasons.”

Wisdom of the Word

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm...do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. —Galatians 5:1

We understand and yet...

When we find something that eases the background pain and stress, we can start obsessing over it. Help us regain perspective on what truly matters in life.



JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, please do not fret or feel ashamed. In truth, your reliance on soothing yourself through food, drink and other habits is completely understandable. You feel a painful kind of loneliness that you naturally try to blot out by taking in things that blur your perception.

There is a much better way out of experiencing these uncomfortable feelings, and that way is through Me. The Helper I sent you, the Holy Spirit, can bring you nourishment so satisfying—especially if you take the time to bring it through your spirit into your heart and up into your awareness in a relaxed, active way—that it can relieve any stress or hurt you feel immediately, without any of the side effects of overindulging in food or drink.

To fill up your spiritual cup, try this: First, relax your mind and body, letting your thoughts and worries fall away. Release any obvious tension in your body. Now remember how much I love you and allow that to kindle a feeling of joyful loving gratitude toward Me in your heart. Imagine sending this out to Me. Stay relaxed and feel yourself receiving something new. The sense of liftedness you'll feel is the Holy Spirit bringing you peace, love, joy, wisdom and strength. Can you bring these gifts into your heart? If so, you will feel it fill. Can you bring these gifts into your mind? If so, you will feel it fill with the most beautiful of thoughts. Drink Me in and allow your cravings to fall away. My love will be what lingers.

“But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.”

—Jesus to the disciples,
John 4:14

Friday

JUNE 16,
2018



*From out of the
most barren pain
comes the most
radiant joy*

Saturday

A READER ASKS

“Dear *Simple Grace*, on January 21, I lost my cousin. She went to the ER about two weeks earlier and was admitted with double pneumonia. She was sedated and put on a ventilator. Due to her anxiety, she would have a full-fledged panic attack every time they tried to wake her up. Each time, they would have to raise the settings on the ventilator and raise her sedation. Her lungs became so damaged and stiff that they were unable to function on their own. She was only 38 with two teenage children. We all prayed so hard for her to be healed. My heart is hurting so badly now. I don’t know how to handle this. My whole family is devastated. Now I am struggling with prayer. I’m asking myself why I pray when God is going to do what He wants to anyway. I’m beginning to think all the promises and God’s love doesn’t apply to me. I just don’t understand why God didn’t answer our prayers. He had the opportunity to let His love and miracles be shown through her. I know His will is better than my will. His ways are not our ways. I’m just at a loss right now.”

Wisdom of the Word

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. —Revelation 21:4

We understand and yet...

When we lose someone we love, it’s hard to see Your purpose through our pain. We know You are good and want to trust in Your promise that all will work for our highest good, but that can feel almost impossible in the face of a sudden loss. How do we see You through our suffering?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, when love weaves another into the fabric of your heart, it can feel as though your heart is literally ripped apart when they cross over to be fully in your Father's Kingdom. I am so sorry for your pain.

“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews.” —Jesus to Pilate, John 18:36 NASB

From where you stand, I can understand how angry you are over a beautiful loved one leaving your world so young. I can understand how it feels as though your Father is ignoring your prayers. But in truth, He is not. He hears every prayer. He knows every hurt. He feels every sting. He factors in all wishes, prayers and happenings and acts in the highest good—always.

Through My incarnation, I showed you that death is nothing to fear. Death is not punishment. If it were, I would not have been turned over to be crucified. When someone crosses over from this world to the Kingdom, it is so they can fulfill a much-needed role. Just as I did. Just as I showed you. Deep down, you know this is true.

Still, my precious one, I understand this does not change your sadness over your loss. Please come to Me in prayer so I may give you tender consolation. I cannot take away all the hurt you're feeling, no, but I can offer some sweet solace. Will you please send out your heart to Me so you may take comfort from My loving arms? It all turns out so well in the end: You can rest in this promise.

Saturday

FATHER'S DAY,
2018

*You are a
beautiful child of
a merciful Father*



Sunday

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, every time Father’s Day rolls around, I can’t help but feel eaten up with irritation and frustration at everyone else’s revelry. Everywhere I turn, there’s some advertisement for the perfect father-daughter relationship: commercials with fathers smiling and laughing with their daughters, coworkers and friends talking about their wonderful plans and how amazing their fathers are. And while I’m happy that’s the reality for most people; for me, Father’s Day is just sad. My father was a drunk who left my mother, my two sisters and me to live in poverty after he took off when I was 4 years old. I know he never loved me because he has not communicated with me since the day he left. Father’s Day is like a yearly commemoration of what I never had, and all the love I ached for after he left. It’s like everywhere I turn I’m slapped in the face, and it just makes me feel even worse and more resentful. How do I get past this anger and hurt?”

Wisdom of the Word

But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief, to repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless. —Psalm 10:14 NKJV

We understand and yet...

Seeing others experiencing loving relationships with their parents can be so painful when we feel unloved.

We wonder if there’s something wrong with us that made the parent turn away. Deep down, we wonder if we are simply unlovable. Could it be true that we’re not worth loving?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

The love of a father is such a supremely beautiful force in the world that your God chose to be in that relationship to you. So I understand how painful it can be to face squarely that your own earthly father didn't love you with the same beauty. But as with all challenges involving suffering, this hurt can lead you to the discovery of an astonishing treasure.

“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother...yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”

—Jesus to the crowd, Luke 14:26 NASB

You know the upside of having a loving earthly father, but the downside is this: If your father had completely come through for you, you might never have looked past him to your Father and Me. No one can love you better than We can. Your prophet Isaiah spoke, “Bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes”—and truly, your Father can change the crown of ashes that is the legacy of an unloving father into a crown of beauty.

You are beautiful. You are tenderly and completely loved. You are safe. You are victorious. You will inherit a Kingdom that is joyful and peaceful beyond your wildest dreams. This is what it means to be your Father's child. Having earthly parents who fail you means that you are better able to look past the things of this world to apprehend the joy of the Kingdom to come.

Rest in My loving arms and allow Me to bring your spirit the truth of this.

✦ Passage cited: Isaiah 61:3 NIV

Sunday

The way back to joy



A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m usually a very high-energy person, but for the past few months, my get-up-and-go is just gone. I have little interest in my work or the volunteer projects I used to love, and every time my husband tries to suggest a fun activity, I just shrug it off and retreat to my couch. I can’t even get excited about going to church anymore. I know I’m just going through the motions instead of living the life You want for me, but I’m so weary. Help!”

Wisdom of the Word

He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power.

—The Prophet Isaiah to the people of Israel, 40:29 NASB

We understand and yet...

Certain seasons in our lives are marked by a listless lack of joy that we can’t shake. Even things we once loved can’t break us out of it. What can help?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, are you actively abiding in Me? I ask because sometimes, without being aware of it, you can charge forward in a different direction than I'm traveling. After all your hustle and bustle fades, you then discover that you're tired and disconnected without knowing why.

If you're listless in a way that no amount of rest can heal, it's likely that you need to reach out for My hand and draw closer to Me.

Is there something that is holding you back from drawing closer to Me? It's likely. When people fall away from Me, it's often because there's some truth about their life or their path that they don't want to face. Do you have a few minutes to let that resistance rise to your surface? If so, find a comfortable way to sit, bring your hands together, close your eyes and ask, *What am I resisting?* Keep still and allow the answer to rise from your heart to your aware mind. You may need to ask for My help with this, sending out the request, *Jesus, help me become aware of what's holding me back from Your love.* Remain still in body and mind and allow what's blocking you to rise. It may take a few minutes. Try to be patient and still. You may feel something unpleasant come up that you have no words for. That's fine: You don't need words because you have Me. Simply ask, *Jesus, take this from me.* You'll feel the burden lift, your heart open and you'll find yourself right by My side.

**"If anyone serves Me,
he must follow Me; and
where I am, there My
servant will be also"**

—Jesus to the Greeks,
John 12:26 NASB

You, newly clean in Me

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I feel so ashamed and dirty after a ‘friend’ groped me at the annual summer church picnic last week. He’s always been touchy with me, but this was on a whole new level, and aggressive to boot. I was so disgusted that I thought I would be sick, but when I confronted him about it, he just smirked and said, ‘You’ve never complained before.’ The thing is, I never felt I could. Now I feel like it’s all my fault for not saying something sooner.” Is it?”

Wisdom of the Word

**The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.** —Psalm 9:9

We understand and yet...

It can be hard not to blame and question ourselves when others violate us physically. How do we learn to overcome our feelings of shame and give them to You?



JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, when someone crosses a boundary and invades your person, it is never your fault. Like a small splotch of mud on the petals of a most beautiful flower, it does not change the interior beauty. It only mars the exterior of the flower for a moment or two...until the next rain washes it away.

You can always bring about that cleansing rain simply by coming to Me in prayer.

When you send out your heart to Me in love and receive My love in return, the Holy Spirit uses My love to wash you clean. No need to spend your time self-shaming when the smudge can be removed easily and completely.

You are your Father's precious creation. As such, you are charged with protecting your Father's dearly loved you. So you must never hesitate to draw a line with another who seeks to cross a boundary he or she should not cross. You not only protect yourself, you protect the other (who is also your Father's creation) from making a mistake. You do two times the good.

Do you have a few minutes to come to Me in prayer so I can illuminate just how precious you are? If so, send out your love for Me and stay still in mind and body as the Holy Spirit brings the truth of who you are to your spirit. Allow this truth to rise into your heart and mind. Can you feel the momentousness of it? You are everything to Me, dear one. Please take care of you.

"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you."

—Jesus to His disciples,
John 15:3–4 NASB

JUNE 20,
2018





*Freedom from
unforgiveness*

Wednesday

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m truly struggling to find it in myself to forgive my brother. Our mother passed away a year ago, and in her will, she left her house, which I was living in at the time, to my brother. I thought my brother would let me stay in the house, but no, he insisted on selling it and forced me out. Now I’m living in a broken-down old rental apartment that’s filled with roaches and the sounds of neighbors fighting and babies crying. I feel so cast out—from the home I once knew, from the heart of my brother. I know I should forgive him, but I harbor anger at him and my mother. They viciously betrayed me, robbed me of my home and destroyed my life! He took the money he got from the house and now lives in a fancy condo with his stuck-up wife. He isn’t unkind to me, but he’s never come to me and asked for forgiveness. Am I wrong to hold this grudge?”

Wisdom of the Word

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. —Peter in his first letter to the exiles, 3:9 NIV

We understand and yet...

When someone betrays or hurts us, our anger and hurt can close us off to the idea of forgiveness. We know we must forgive to find freedom and peace, but it can seem almost impossible to answer the pain others cause us with love. How can we learn to forgive with an open heart?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, when you hold unforgiveness in your heart in the form of anger and resentment and outrage, you create an internal storm. It's as though you keep in motion a pebble that keeps falling again and again into the still waters of your spirit, creating uncomfortable turbulence.

When I walked your world, I spoke again and again of the importance of forgiveness. That's because letting go

of those things you hold against another is the only way to peace. And peace is the only way to joy. And joy is the only way to pure love. And pure love is the truest way to stay very near to Me. So you must let go of unforgiveness.

How do you summon the great calm that lies in your spirit just waiting to be brought to your surface? By surrendering your anger and resentment to Me and allowing My Helper silence the turbulence in your spirit that these feelings have caused. Do you have a moment to discover peace right now? If so, sit comfortably and close your eyes. Send out your heart to Me and feel the Holy Spirit lift your spirit in communion with Mine. From this place of safety and love, bring to mind how this person wronged you. Bring to heart the anger you feel toward the one who wronged you. Invite this anger to be all that it is. When it reaches its natural fullness, offer it to Me, asking, *Jesus, please take my unforgiveness*. Relax. As you open your eyes, feel the freedom, joy and love that is now yours.

And [Jesus] awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. —Mark 4:39

The power of now

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m always afraid I’m missing out on something that I can’t commit to what’s right in front of me. I have a fiancé I love who I can’t bring myself to marry for fear that ‘the one’ I’m meant to be with is still out there. I have a job I won’t fully dedicate myself to because I’m always wondering if I could be doing something better. I can’t even say yes to an invite lately without worrying I’m missing out on something else. Why is this?”

Wisdom of the Word

“Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him.”

—Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, 7:17

We understand and yet...

It’s hard to know when to accept what’s before us and when to want more. How do we know when to settle down?



JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, I'm sorry for the restlessness that causes you to continually compare your options in your mind rather than fully inhabit the present moment. In truth, you fear you will miss out on something because you *are* missing out on something in your restlessness. When your mind is busy comparing and contrasting your options, you're like a bee flitting around the flower but unable to land. And just like that bee, you cannot find what you are seeking without allowing yourself to just *be* in the moment.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

—Jesus to the crowd,
Matthew 11:29 NKJV

Will you do something for Me? Go outside this morning and listen to what you hear. Lose yourself in the bird-song. See what is all around you and lose yourself in the beauty of the play of light on the newly born grass and leaves. Smell whatever is growing or blooming and lose yourself in the fresh, green fragrance. When you surrender to the now, you fall into My arms. The now is where I always am. You cannot encounter the living Me in your thoughts of the past. You cannot encounter the living Me in your thoughts of the future. I am always and already in the here and now. Right where you are. You find Me when you wake up to what's under you nose.

The more time you spend living with an awareness rooted in the here and now, the more rest you will find for your soul and the more joy you will find in your days.

Thursday

Beyond training wheels

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I feel so guilty saying this, but the way my father is deteriorating right now, I find myself praying You will just take him home to be with You. I love him with all my heart and have been blessed to be able to care for him through his battle with cancer, but he is in so much agony now that I can barely stand it. I feel like such a bad daughter for saying this, but I just want his pain to end. Am I wrong to feel this way? Please help me.”

Wisdom of the Word

“Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you.”

—The Lord to the exiles,
Isaiah 41:10 NIV

We understand and yet...

When loved ones become very ill, we can feel guilty and full of regret that we can't help them.

How do we cope with the despair we feel when we can do no more?



JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, I'm sorry for the sorrow of your situation right now: My heart goes out to you. You have enough to shoulder without adding guilt to the mix of emotions. Please let any self-recrimination fall away.

When you or one you love approaches the end of their worldly life, it's natural to feel fearful and confused. At a turning point like this, it's crucial to spend more time in loving communion with Me so you may gain strength in the current struggle and receive the truth of the beauty and peace and love of the Kingdom to come.

I know you hold your thinking mind in high esteem, but when you rely on thinking to sort out the larger questions, it can be like relying on training wheels instead of riding free and strong. No matter how intelligent you are, your thinking mind is able to only approximate the truth. When you seek quiet communion with Me and allow the Holy Spirit to bring your spirit truth, you will receive the whole truth as a gift. You may not be able to put this truth into thoughts or words, but you will truly know it.

Do you have a minute to come to Me now? If so, send out your heart to Me in loving gratitude and ask, *Jesus, bring me the truth of the Kingdom*. Keep your mind still and your body relaxed as the Holy Spirit infuses your spirit with the knowledge you need to feel hopeful and loving through a loved one's last days.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament...you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy."

—Jesus to the disciples,
John 16:20

Friday

JUNE 23,
2018

*Help for the
hurting*



Saturday

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, my very best friend recently went through a divorce and I’m afraid for her soul. She has always been very reserved and proper, but recently she’s turned into a promiscuous party girl. She dates a new man every weekend and stays out all night drinking and spending the night with the man. I’ve tried to talk to her about it, but she dismisses me as ‘a prude’ and tells me that I’m ‘just jealous’ of how much fun she’s having. She’s told me that if I keep pestering her about her behavior, she’s going to drop me as a friend. I’m just trying to help her! She deserves so much better than the life she is choosing, and as her best friend, I feel responsible to help her see that. I know she’s dealing with issues much larger than even our friendship, but I don’t know how to help her when she puts up these walls. What should I do? What can I do?”

Wisdom of the Word

If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life.

—John in his first letter to the Early Church, 5:16 NIV

We understand and yet...

When people we love start to veer off the right course, we step in to help them back...even when they don’t want our help. It’s hard to watch them make mistakes and trust that all will truly work for good. How do we know when to step in and when to let go?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, being rebuffed from helping another to act in his or her best interest is both a heartbreaking and infuriating experience. I'm sorry for the pain you're feeling. I know this pain all too well from My experience in your world.

And yet, each one of you is gifted with free will, and so there is only so far you can go in helping one another. It sounds as though you've done as much in your world as you can for the present moment, but there's another realm that you can work through: your Father's Kingdom.

Do you have a few minutes to send your beloved one a special portion of My love? If so, settle into stillness and ground yourself through your senses in the here and now. Close your eyes and simply tune into what you can hear, and smell and feel. From this sense of groundedness, allow the gratitude you feel toward Me kindle your heart in love and release that love upward and outward. As you feel the Holy Spirit lift your spirit, bring to mind the person you are concerned about and ask something like, *Jesus, please help me to bring Your love to the hurting, tender places in my friend that are leading her into danger.* Relax and feel your heart swell as My love fills you.

When you're ready, imagine powerfully sending out this love to the one who's in great need. As you breathe in, take in more of My love. As you breathe out, send out more of My love. There now...by bringing My love to your friend, you do more good than you can possibly imagine.

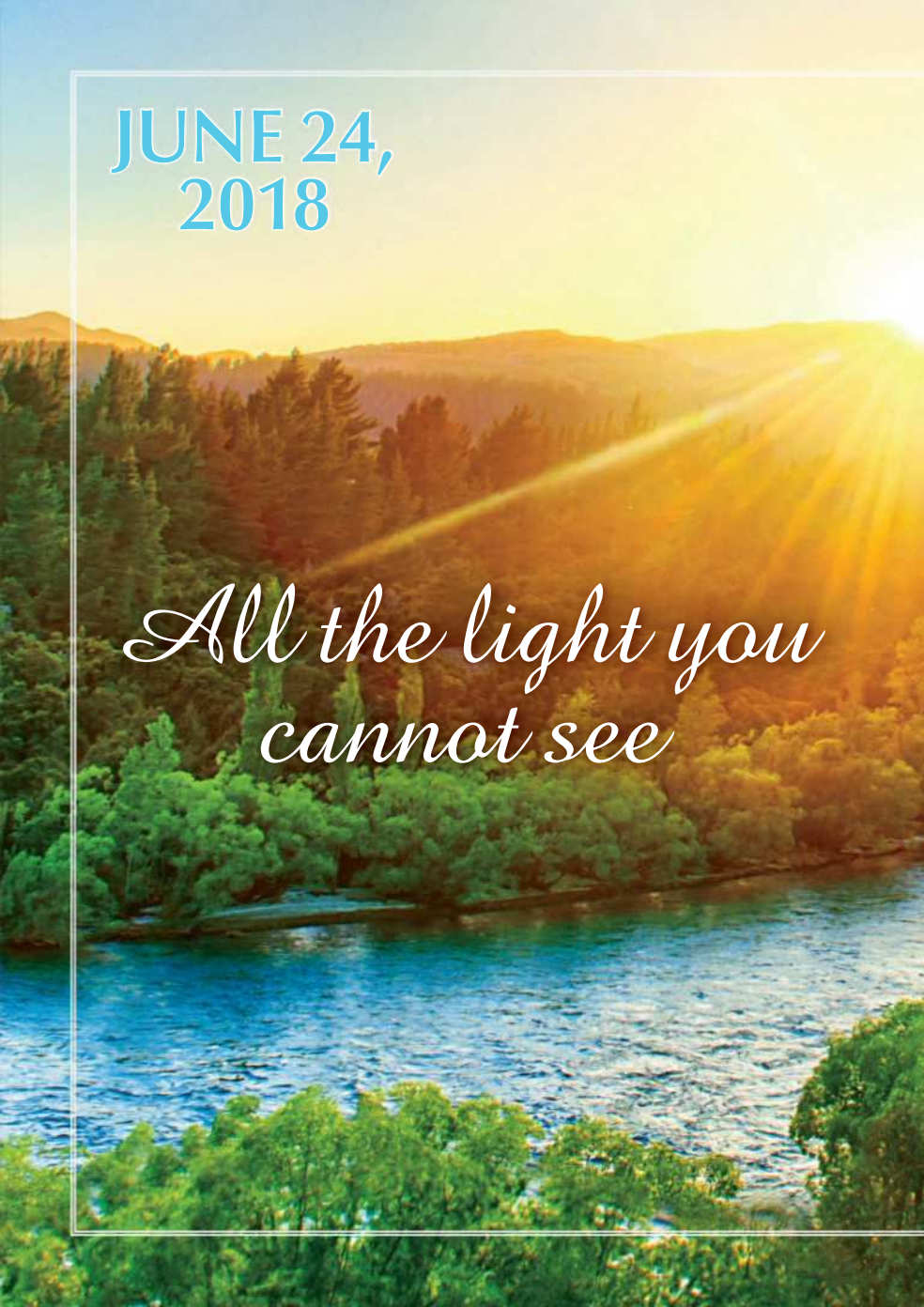
"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

—Jesus to Zacchaeus,
Luke 19:10

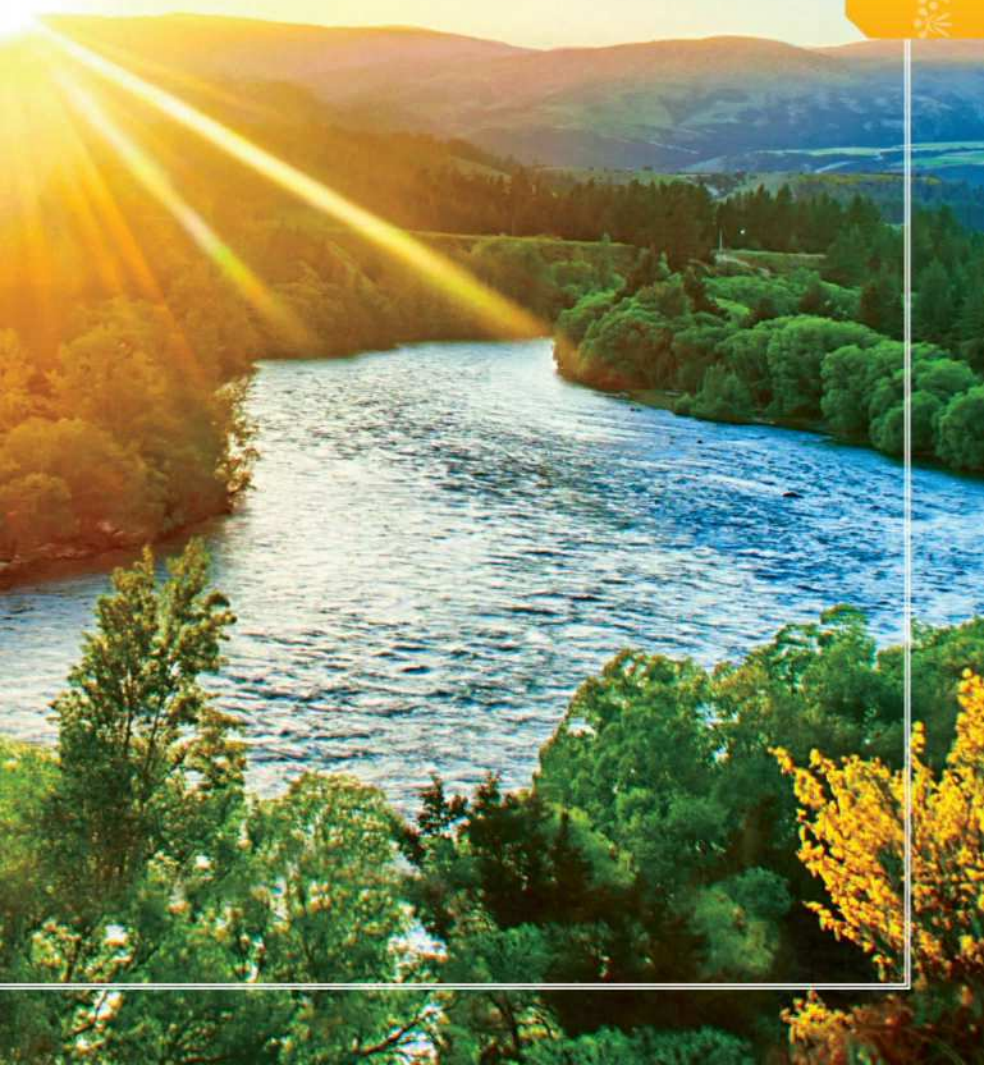
Saturday

JUNE 24,
2018

*All the light you
cannot see*



Sunday



A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, lately I just can’t seem to enjoy a single moment with my family without feeling sad about how fleeting it all is. When I look at my life, all I can see is the way all my hopes and dreams have transformed into a string of memories that I would give anything to relive. And now every joyful moment is tinged by the inevitable truth that it too will become a memory I long for. For example, my youngest son graduated from middle school last week. It should have been a happy celebration, but all I could think of as I watched him cross the stage to receive his certificate was how even the joy I felt in that moment would give way to grief at time gone by. I pray to find joy as I look toward a future full of this reality, but all I feel is overwhelming dread at how everything I hold as precious right now will all fade. Please help!”

Wisdom of the Word

**My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,
and they come to an end without hope.
Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath.**

—Job in the Book of Job, 7:6–7 NIV

We understand and yet...

We want to be able to feel joy in each day, but the passage of time often fills us with deep sadness. It’s as though each moment is sand flowing through our fingers and we can’t help but feel grief at the way everything, especially the good times, are fleeting. What can help?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, My heart is with you: You are blessed in your ability to see clearly the true fleeting nature of this life and mourn the losses that come with time's passing in a humble and beautiful way.

But you need not cheat yourself out of the joy of today just because tomorrow will come. Imagine that your Father's Kingdom is an intricate latticework of the light of love. Just as light comes from the sun, so does this light of love emanate from your Father outward in all directions. This light of love is so bright that even though it's everywhere, nourishing you all in a lattice of love that stretches between your Father and Me, you can't see it. You can only feel it with your heart.

You can also help build and extend it. Whenever you feel pure, openhearted love for your Father, Me, the Holy Spirit or one another, you join this latticework in a new place—you "eat of this bread"—and add a new golden link. You forge a new connection. You become more fully embedded in your Father's Kingdom and help grow its beauty...even as you walk the world.

So on these days of joy, please do not lament the passing of the moment in your world; rather, celebrate the creation of a new link in your Father's glorious Kingdom, celebrate the addition to your treasure in Heaven...that which you will inherit when you come into your glory.

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever."

—Jesus to the crowd,
John 6:51

Don't forget to love you

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m exhausting myself by taking on too much recently, though truly, I have no one to blame but myself. From my boss asking me to take on more work to my friend begging me to help organize her youth church retreat, I pride myself on being the one who can lessen their load. And yet, every day I feel myself growing more frazzled and worn out by my inability to say no. I know I’ll end up snapping if I don’t stop. Why can’t I?”

Wisdom of the Word

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

—Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, 9:19

We understand and yet...

Sometimes, we want so much to care for others that we forget to care for ourselves. We want to be beacons of Your love, but how do we know when to slow down?



JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, you have a beautiful heart to take doing for others with such seriousness, but you're missing part of the rule. What if one of your neighbors was completely overtaxed with helping others? You would love her enough to say, "Friend, why don't you take it easier?" Loving your neighbor as yourself means saying the same words to yourself. Flip the saying around and you find that it tells you to "love yourself as your neighbor."

You mention that you pride yourself on your ability to help...can you let that go? You need help. You need love. You need caretaking. You are no different from your neighbor—and that's a beautiful thing. Do others the great favor of allowing them to tend to you just as you tend to them.

Will you let Me tend to you too? I would very much like to. If yes, please sit comfortably and allow your body and mind to settle into an easy stillness. Send Me your love and feel the tender inner trembling as the Holy Spirit lifts your spirit. Gather up your worry over how much you have to do as though each pressure point were a petal held in your hands. See yourself throwing all the petals up into the air to be under My care. I know what to do with your worries: You can always feel comfortable surrendering them to Me. Let your spirit rejoice in the relief of not having to do it all and let that feeling carry you through the day.

**"The second is this:
'You shall love your
neighbor as yourself.'
There is no other
commandment
greater than these."**

—Jesus to the scribe,
Mark 12:31

Treasure that lasts forever

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m furious with my children for forcing me to clean out my home last week! For years they’ve been on me about what a safety hazard all the ‘junk’ I’ve ‘piled up’ is, but they just don’t get it. Everything in my house has precious meaning or a wonderful memory associated with it, and now that I’m older, that’s pretty much all I have left. They are so cruel to ask me to give them up... and to not understand how I can’t. Please help me!”

Wisdom of the Word

For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh...and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

—1 John 2:16

We understand and yet...

We can sometimes get overly attached to things that remind us of happier times. How do we find the strength to let them go when they mean so much to us?



JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, things of your world will always be passing away. Teacups get chipped. Paper turns crisp and crumbles. Old toys sink into themselves. Things do not matter. What lasts is love.

What you bind in your world through love will remain with you eternally. The precious moments with your kids? It's forever. The beauty of holding hands with your love as the sun sets? It's forever. You don't need tokens or photos: What's written on your heart lives forever in your Father's Kingdom. It's your eternal treasure.

When you hold on to things as though they're the love itself, it's as if you don't trust your Father's promises. You reduce the power of your heart to a mere thing. You take something spacious and make it very small.

When you're ready to let go of the things that have built up into clutter, ask Me to join you. Collect what you need to donate or discard into a box and set it before you. Sitting comfortably and still, close your eyes and send out the love you have in your heart for Me. Feel your spirit lift as the Holy Spirit brings you confirmation of our communion. As you open your eyes and pick up each object, share with Me your feelings about the experience each represents. Feel as I magnify those feelings—that's My reassurance that what you create in love will live on and on. No things required.

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”

—Jesus to the crowd,
Matthew 6:20–21

JUNE 27,
2018

*The key to
joyful change*



Wednesday

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m so frustrated by the changes at my job that I feel like just throwing in the towel. I’ve worked at the same company for most of my adult life, and though I love my work and my coworkers, I just can’t keep up with all the new technology. It’s like every day, there’s some new software to master or some ‘upgrade’ to a system I’ve just finished learning how to use, and lately it feels like I spend more time fiddling with my computer than I spend doing my actual job. I’ve never been the type of person to up and quit when things get hard, but all these changes just make me feel like *I’m* the outmoded operating system, just waiting to be phased out. I don’t have enough money to retire, but I can’t face living out the rest of my work life under this cloud of stress and hopelessness. Please help me find a way forward!”

Wisdom of the Word

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look...to the things that are unseen. —Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, 4:17

We understand and yet...

When change upsets the routine of our lives, it can be frustrating and nearly impossible to adapt. “Upgrades” made to make our lives easier can be hurtful, as they make us feel outdated and incompetent. How can we stay encouraged when we feel like we’re falling behind?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, I understand and sympathize with your frustration: Change is always hard. When confronted with something that challenges our habitual way of doing things, it can be tempting to simply dig in and refuse.

The secret to succeeding in a changing world is to allow *yourself* to be changed. Your mind is a kind of container for information. It holds your past experience and patterns your future understanding based on what you've previously encountered. When you come upon something radically new, you have to allow the way that your mind patterns experience to change. Once you do that, adopting the new way is easy.

Fortunately for you, I brought you a way to clear away your mind's old patterns and update the way you pattern experience going forward: the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can update your mind's "processing system" much like the way you update your computer's operating system. And there's no work involved—just the willingness to surrender. Do you have a few minutes for an update to your spiritual processing system? If so, sit quietly and comfortably and send out your heart to Me. As you feel your spirit lifted in return, breathe out deeply and let go. Let go of any tension or worries and allow what the Spirit brings to remake you. Rest...relax...trust. Rest...relax...trust. *Abh*...there, now you are brand-new!

"Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed."

—Jesus to the disciples,
Matthew 9:17

Making you good as new

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I’m so overwhelmed with guilt that I can barely function. A year ago today, I was texting while driving and caused a massive pileup on the highway. More than one person was severely injured, though thankfully, nobody died. I was ‘punished’ in court and ask for Your forgiveness every day, but I feel sure You can’t forgive the pain I’ve caused those poor people. I feel crushed by my own conscience. Please help.”

Wisdom of the Word
He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

—John in his first letter to the Early Church, 1:9 NASB

We understand and yet...
Sometimes we despair that our mistakes, especially ones that hurt others, are unforgivable in Your eyes. Is there a limit to what You are willing to forgive?



JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, when you encounter a dirty glass—one with a milk residue around the inside of the rim—and you lovingly wash and dry it, do you remember the marks that were there? Neither does your Father remember your mistakes once you’ve surrendered to Him in forgiveness.

But consider a time when you’ve only cleaned part of the glass...the stain that you missed will keep catching your eye. That’s why it’s

important that you surrender *all* of yourself in asking for forgiveness. What’s important is to hold nothing back.

Do you have a few minutes to try this complete surrender, this repentance, right now? If so, take a comfortable seat and close your eyes. Bring to mind and heart one thing you’re grateful for and allow that gratitude to kindle into loving affection. Send out your beautiful feelings to Me and feel your spirit lift in response to the Holy Spirit bringing us into communion. From the comfort and safety of My arms, allow all the negative feelings you have about the accident to rise. The anger. The sadness. The guilt. The fear. Invite all those feelings to become fully expressed. Don’t worry...don’t hold back...I’m right here. These feelings, no matter how strong, cannot hurt you. As you feel them each reach their fullness, let them go. Just breathe them out. Imagine them lifted from you forever. There...now that your inside is clean, there’s no need to scrub the outside. Forgive yourself, child.

“First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.”

—Jesus to a Pharisee,
Matthew 23:26

The trouble with revenge



A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, after my daughter’s botched back surgery last month, I’ve been consumed with vengeful thoughts. I keep envisioning myself storming into the hospital, lacing into the doctors and filing a malpractice lawsuit. My daughter gets upset when I share these revenge fantasies with her, but I can’t just watch her suffer while no one is held accountable. They should pay for what they did to her. Right?”

Wisdom of the Word

Do not say, “I’ll do to them as they have done to me; I’ll pay them back for what they did.”

—Proverbs 24:29 NIV

We understand and yet...

When our loved ones are wronged, we want to even the score. We know this isn’t Your way...but sometimes it seems like it should be!

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, you can't see the damage that having vengeful feelings and acting on them does to you, but I can. If you could see with My eyes, you'd see clearly that nothing you could gain from lashing out at another will be worth what you lose by doing so.

When you see young children, you can see something luminous in their eyes, in their skin. It's not just youth that you're seeing: It's your Father's light shining through the innocents, unsullied by hatred, grudges, ill wishes toward others. They're pure vessels and beacons of your Father's light and love.

You can be a pure, light, loving child too no matter what your age: You need only to let go of your grudges and vengefulness to better let your Father's light shine brightly through you. While you can and should work toward justice in your world, you must stop short of doing anything that cultivates hatred, self-righteousness or hostility in your own heart. The clogging of your heart will outweigh the good of the outcome you're fighting for. Trust your Father with the ultimate evening of the scales.

To get rid of the grunge that's built up from your revenge fantasies, ask Me to take them away. Settle into stillness and imagine sending out your heart to Me. As the Holy Spirit lifts your spirit, ask, *Jesus, please free me from the prison of revenge.* Then relax, allowing your thoughts to fall away, and emerge brand-new.

**“Love your enemies,
bless those who curse
you, do good to those
who hate you.”**

—Jesus to the crowd,
Matthew 5:44 NKJV

JUNE 30,
2018

*The beauty
that is to come*



Saturday

A READER ASKS

“Dear Jesus, I was diagnosed with stage-four lung cancer three months ago, and with every day that passes, I grow more and more terrified of dying. I know I shouldn’t be, or at the very least, should be comforted by Your promises of Paradise, but I’m sad to say that just isn’t the case. Each day feels like a steady march toward a dark unknown that I can’t seem to face, no matter how hard I try. And while I walk around in the world in a daze of dread, the whole situation is made worse by having to pretend that I’ve made peace with it for the sake of my family and friends. I assure them every day that it will all be fine and that I am finally going home to be with You, which I always believed with my whole heart. Why can’t I trust that it is true now? I want to face the end with courage and grace. Please help me find it in myself to do it.”

Wisdom of the Word

And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.

—Moses to Israel, Deuteronomy 31:8 NKJV

We understand and yet...

Though we know the eternal life that awaits us when we leave this world, it can be daunting to actually face it. We have found comfort and comforted others with the promise of Paradise, but when it comes time to see it fulfilled, we are filled with fear and dread. Help!

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Dear child, your fear is understandable: The unknown is always frightening. The good news is that you can gradually increase your sense of comfort at leaving your world for your Father's Kingdom simply by spending more quiet time with Me.

Imagine preparing for a trip to Greece. You would read guidebooks that give you a sense of what to expect. You would immerse yourself in language tapes to develop an ear for the language. You might even listen to Greek music and dine on Greek food to help transition to the way of life you will encounter on your trip.

Prayer works in a similar way to prepare you for your Father's Kingdom. By immersing yourself in all that the Holy Spirit brings you, you strengthen your spiritual body and so begin your transition to your beautiful inheritance. The joy you feel when surrendered in silent prayer gives you a taste of the beauty that is to come.

Do you have a few minutes for a preview right now? If so, kindle the affectionate love and grateful joy you have for Me in your heart. Imagine these feelings as radiating out from your heart in all directions to Me. Relax and feel your spirit lifted as the Holy Spirit brings back My warm and loving response. Can you feel My golden love filling you up and up? Soak in this feeling for as long as you are able to keep active thoughts at bay. There are no words for this beauty—but it will soon be yours completely.

**“Truly I say to you,
today you shall be
with Me in Paradise.”**

—Jesus on the Cross
to a criminal being
crucified beside him,
Luke 23:43 NASB

Loving prayer

We've designed our devotional to work best in conjunction with five minutes of daily quiet, loving contemplation. Since we've received a lot of questions about the best way to do this, we've put together this mini guide. We hope this practice brings you many blessings!

When asked by a Pharisee what was the greatest commandment of religious law, Jesus was very clear: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matthew 22:37). Jesus was building on what Moses said to the Israelites as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy (13:3): Moses referenced loving with your whole heart and soul; Jesus adds mind to the mix. We at *Simple Grace* take Jesus at His word and have dedicated ourselves to loving our Lord in a quiet, mindful way daily.

MORE THAN SENTIMENT

When was the last time you felt overwhelmed by love? Maybe it was when you were watching your granddaughter sleep, or

in response to a gift of flowers your husband surprised you with. When you think back to that moment, can you remember how strong the power of that love was? Rather than a fleeting thought or even a feeling, that love felt almost as though it had a substance and strength like light or sound or wind.

That kind of powerful love is what Jesus meant in his commandment to us: You send Him your worldly love and He'll respond with His divine love. You send Him your limited feeling and He'll transform it into something infinite and eternal.

As you rest in the golden state that this loving to and fro creates, you give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to cleanse your spirit of all the grudge that builds up in daily life. As Jesus transforms your heart, the Spirit reorders and purifies your spirit.

primer

GETTING STARTED


Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed for five minutes. Settle into a comfortable sitting position and bring your hands together in prayer or simply clasped. Close your eyes and give your thoughts a minute or two to drift from your mind. See them as so many passing clouds—they're there, but you don't have to think them through. Shake out the tension from your shoulders and anywhere stress has gotten stuck.

From this place of mental and physical stillness, bring to mind an image of Jesus. Feel your heart open and your body relax even further. Imagine that your love is a powerful, permeating substance like light or wind and direct it either inward or outward toward Jesus. You'll feel your spirit lift as the Holy Spirit brings you confirmation of your loving communion.

Now here's the hard part: Rest in His arms, staying still in mind and body for five minutes. (It may help to set a timer so you don't have to worry about when



to finish.) As thoughts arise, allow them to pass by so you can fully receive. Jesus asks us to love not only with our heart and our soul but also with our mind: Surrendering our thoughts, leaving our small self behind, is critical to experience a fuller communion with Him. As you emerge from this prayer, you will feel filled with love, light and sweet peace.

Just five minutes a day can fill your heart with love, leave your spirit newly refreshed and bring you closer in every way to your Lord and Savior. 

Loving prayer extras

Your relationship with Jesus is uniquely yours, so don't be afraid to personalize your prayer time. Here are 3 ideas to get you started

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT JAR

As the Apostle Paul describes, communing with the Holy Spirit produces the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). To track your sweet spiritual progress, each day jot down on a slip of paper the beautiful fruits you receive from spending a few minutes in loving prayer, then place the paper in a jar. When you feel doubt or despair, reach into the jar and read your little love notes to see just how far you've come and all the fruits of spirit that you've gained.

BREATHING IN JESUS

The Hebrew word *ruach* is used to describe the Holy Spirit, but it also means “breath.” So when Jesus brought us the Helper, He *breathed* on the Apostles and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:22) Whenever you're feeling stressed or fearful, your



breath can be a wonderful link to the Lord: As you breathe in, imagine you're filling your lungs with the peace and joy of Jesus. As you breathe out, imagine you're releasing your love to Him. Continue taking these loving/healing breaths until your spirit lifts.

DEVOTION WALKING

The Bible asks us to “walk in love, as Christ loved us” (Ephesians 5:2). The next time you're out for a walk, try this: Settle into a relaxed pace and send Jesus a steady wave of love. If a negative emotion arises, imagine tying it to a helium balloon and releasing it up to Him. You'll feel lighter with each step!

"It's like a monthly love letter from God"*

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Statement of Faith *from the Editors of Simple Grace*

The word “creed” comes from the Latin root word meaning “heart.” So at *Simple Grace*, our creed is not just a collection of facts that we believe in our heads—it is a statement of beliefs that we give our hearts to. It’s a simple list: We are not theologians, but ordinary Christians eager to share our faith with our readers.

We give our hearts to the living triune God, who created and sustains the universe, who came to humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and who continues to be at work among us in the Holy Spirit.

We give our hearts to Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, true God and true human. We believe that the life of Jesus offers us the most perfect glimpse at who He is and what He calls us to be.

We give our hearts to God’s continuing revelation to us, especially in the Bible, the inspired Word of God. The Bible is our ultimate authority, our trusted guide, our deepest source of comfort and strength and the bedrock of our faith. We believe that God also speaks to us in other ways, especially through the beauty of creation and through communities and individuals of goodwill.

We give our hearts to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who comforts and sustains us, and through whom God’s love is poured into our hearts and our lives.

We give our hearts to our calling as children of God. We believe that God calls us to be in a relationship of love with Him and with others, and the best way to deepen these relationships is through a life of worship and prayer, and through prayerful reading of the Scriptures.

We give our hearts to our profession as editors and writers. As women of various ages, races and Christian denominations, we dedicate ourselves to serving our sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ in the spirit of love and truth. We strive to provide inspirational, loving content for readers across all branches of the Christian family.

Our Mission

We seek to encourage others in the simple joy of abiding in God's grace through beautiful images and inspirational real-life stories. We strive to help others develop a closer relationship to our Savior through daily devotions written from Jesus's perspective & grounded in Scripture.

We're here to help!

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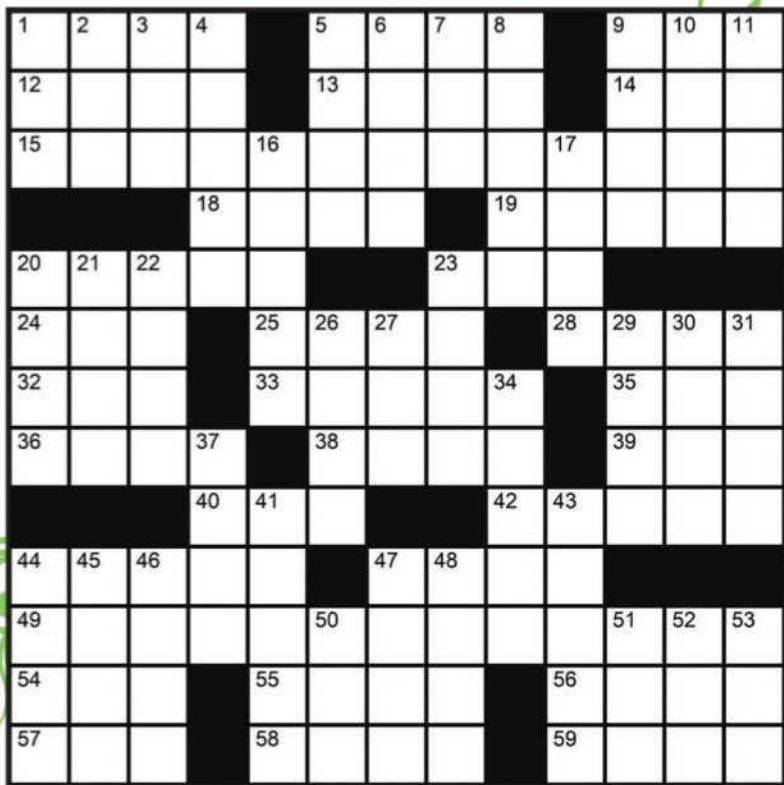
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Crossword



PHOTOS: GETTY, CROSSWORD: HARVEY ESTES

ACROSS

- 1** Ancient Roman garment
5 Animals offered for sacrifice (Micah 6:7)
9 On vacation
12 "Noah found favor in the ____ of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8)
13 Phantom of the Opera's name
14 Pint-size
15 "For ____ and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)
18 Frozen princess
19 Endures
20 Bare minimum
23 Carry on, as a trade
24 Einstein's birthplace **5 ACROSS**
25 "Him who is ____ to do far more abundantly" (Ephesians 3:20)
28 Lentil dish that Jacob prepared for Esau (Genesis 25:34)



- 32** Brazilian cruise destination
- 33** Circular
- 35** Feel sorrow about
- 36** Right on the map?
- 38** Teenage woe
- 39** Coach Parseghian of Notre Dame
- 40** "How Great Thou ____"
- 42** "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting ____" (Proverbs 21:6)
- 44** Christian magazine *Simple* ____

- 47** John, Paul, George or Ringo, e.g.
- 49** Exhortation to praise (1 Thessalonians 5:16)
- 54** Kind of battery
- 55** "Who is like you, O Lord, among the ____?" (Exodus 15:11)
- 56** To the sheltered side, at sea
- 57** "It's cold!"
- 58** Raid the fridge
- 59** Baptism or Confirmation, for example

DOWN

- 1** Oolong or green, e.g.
- 2** Popeye's Olive
- 3** Hairstyling goop
- 4** Burnt offering residue (Leviticus 6:10)
- 5** Ministers, informally
- 6** Land measure
- 7** Prefix with place or print
- 8** Résumé listing
- 9** Possesses, like sheep (Matthew 18:12)
- 10** Jesus washed those of the disciples (John 13:5)
- 11** G-men
- 16** Souls of martyrs were under this in Revelation 6:9
- 17** Contrary votes
- 20** Entice
- 21** *On the Waterfront* director Kazan
- 22** Book just before Obadiah
- 23** The Keystone State (abbr.)
- 26** Fishing vessel
- 27** Third gospel, in the French Bible
- 29** "Let their own table before them become a ____" (Psalm 69:22)
- 30** Coin on the Continent
- 31** Grow tiresome
- 34** Evil Spirit
- 37** Folded fast food
- 41** Occupy the throne
- 43** In conflict
- 44** Snatch suddenly
- 45** Raise
- 46** Slightly open
- 47** Furniture for a dream or vision (Job 33:15)
- 48** Poison ivy symptom
- 50** Dove call
- 51** Boxer played by Will Smith
- 52** "Are we there ____?"
- 53** "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will ____ Him" (Revelation 1:7)



26 DOWN

Join the *Simple Grace* Prayer Circle & we'll offer up your plea to Jesus

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Solution to Crossword on pg 140



GETTY



Even Though We Are
Apart, Your Spirit Lives
Forever In My Heart!



Tenderly crafted
by hand with a real
glitter globe!

Measures
approximately
5¼" high

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Huntersville, NC



"Having quiet prayer time in my arbor."

—Rebecca Wood,
Mesa, AZ



"Marveling at God's beautiful handiwork."

—Janet Rogers, Mableton, GA

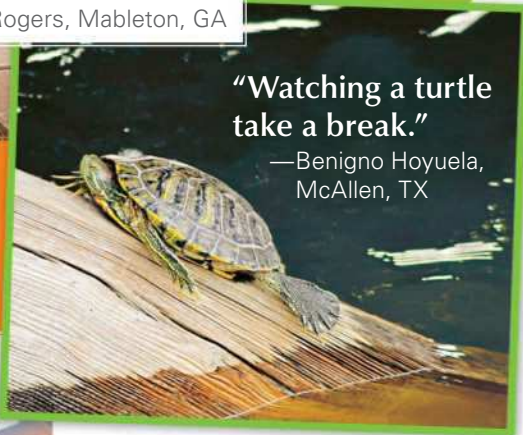
"The joy of my life reading her daily inspiration."

—Jerilynn Gadbois,
Appleton, WI



Have a photo of someone or something that lifts your spirit?

Please email it to us at MyPhoto@simplegrace.com



"Watching a turtle take a break."

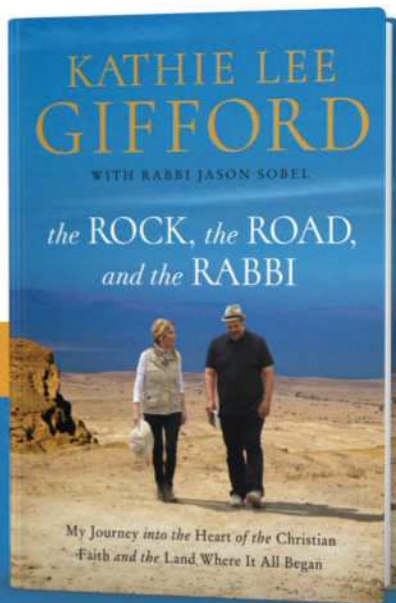
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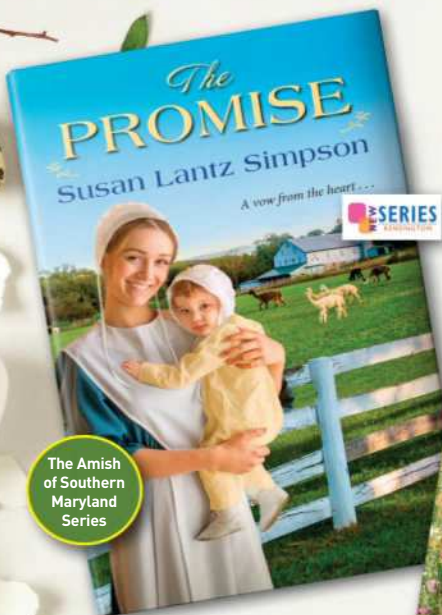
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