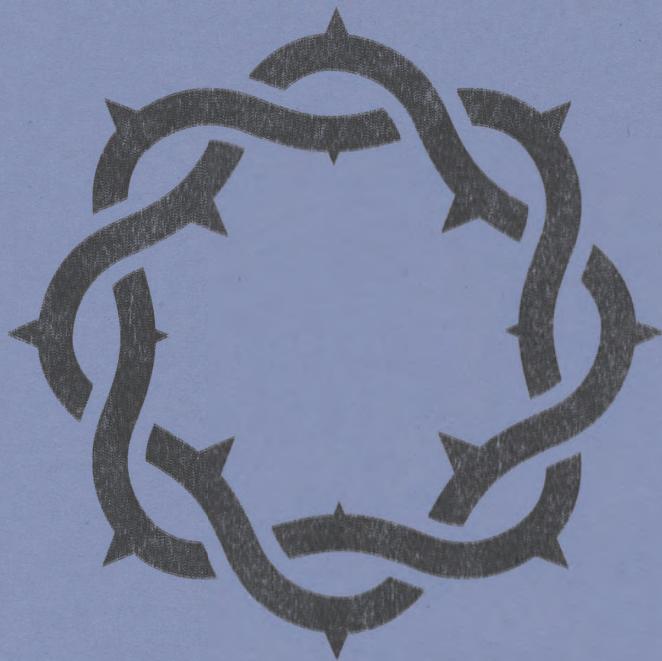


ESSENTIAL CONNECTION

DEVOTIONS FOR STUDENTS



COMPASSIONATE
PATIENT

SEPTEMBER 2013

WRATHFUL
REDEEMER

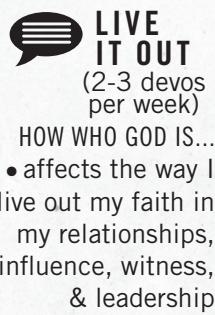
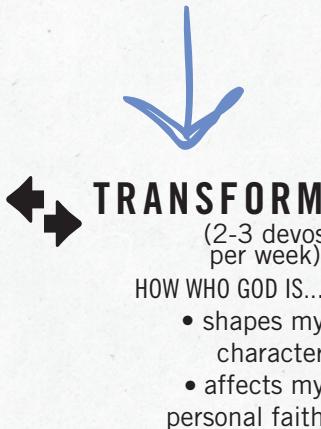
EACH ISSUE OF EC IS ROOTED IN GOD'S CHARACTER.

Each month, the devotions will focus on 4 aspects of His character, 1 per week.

During each week, you'll examine God's character through 3 lenses: 



- Who God is
- What He has done, said, & planned



IN ADDITION, EACH MONTH, YOU'LL BE CHALLENGED TO:



Memorize Scripture
(p. 3, 12, 23, 33)



Put spiritual disciplines into practice (p. 31)



Spend time in prayer (p. 20)



Read through the Bible (p. 11)



Apply what you learn in sermons (p. 43)

ESSENTIAL CONNECTION

VOLUME 19, NO. 6 SEPTEMBER 2013

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THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO _____

MY MEMORY VERSES FOR THIS MONTH: _____

NEED A REMINDER TO SPEND TIME IN SCRIPTURE?

Follow us:



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[www.twitter.com/
ECdevo](http://www.twitter.com/
ECdevo)

ESSENTIAL CONNECTION APP

Now available in the iTunes App Store! Now you can spend time with God wherever you are!

{ THE GOSPEL }

GOD RULES. The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. (*Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; Col. 1:16-17*)

WE SINNED. We all choose to disobey God. The Bible calls this sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (*Rom. 3:23*)

GOD PROVIDED. God sent Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. (*John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 6:23*)

JESUS GIVES. He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be

welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! (*Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; Eph. 2:8-9*)

WE RESPOND. Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus. (*John 14:6; Rom. 10:9-10,13*)

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

How do you encourage yourself and others to pursue holiness?

"I encourage my friends to bring everything to the Lord! The peace you receive only makes you want to be more like Him. Also, I share Ephesians 5:1."

—Heather, via Facebook

"Know that Jesus is the true Savior, and that we need to follow Him!"

—Micah, via Facebook

"Hebrews 4:11-13 . . .the main [thing] is that we need to encourage others with the love God gave us."

—Gabe, via email

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

Who is the most compassionate person you know? Why?

JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Send us your response at essentialconnectiondevo@gmail.com or tell us on Facebook.

COMPASSIONATE

COMPASSION

*To bear with,
SUFFER WITH,
to love,
TO HAVE MERCY;*

*those who
EXPERIENCE GOD'S
compassion
are responsible for
having compassion
on OTHERS.*

MEMORY VERSE

Tear your hearts, not just your clothes, and return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and He relents from sending disaster.

—Joel 2:13

A COMPASSIONATE GOD

PAUSE

Find a quiet place where you can be alone. Take a deep breath and ask God to reveal more of His character to you today.

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and rich in faithful love. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.
—Psalm 103:8,13

Read Psalm 103:8-14 in your Bible. Underline the words or phrases that teach you about God's compassion and how He shows it to us.

- Think about the analogy in verse 13. How does it help you to better understand God's compassion? If compassion isn't a big part of your relationship with your parents, how is God's compassion different?
- How have you seen God display His compassion in someone's life? In your life?

BEHIND THE STORY

In verses 11-12, the psalmist used imagery to help us understand both God's love and compassion toward us.

"As high as the heavens": This is an immeasurable distance used to show that God's love for us is infinite.

"As far as the east from the west": Another immeasurable distance is used to help us see that God doesn't just forgive; He takes our sin away, removing it from our lives.

RESPOND

Think about God's compassion toward you—shown most clearly in Jesus willingly taking on our sin and defeating it on the cross. Journal your response to God's compassion below. Take time to thank and praise Him for specific ways He has treated you with compassion.

THE POINT

Compassion is a key component of God's character.

Because compassion is at the core of who He is, God has not given us what we deserve: punishment for our sin.

MONDAY

9.2

BEHIND THE STORY

The phrase “all who wait patiently for Him are happy” in verse 18 has a dual meaning. In context, Isaiah was telling the people of Judah that blessings would come to all who expectantly waited for God to rescue them from the Assyrians. For us, “those who wait” refers to faithful believers who don’t rush ahead of God to find our own solutions to problems, but instead seek God and wait with hope, expecting Him to act.

WAITING FOR YOU

PAUSE

To prepare your heart for God’s Word, listen to and ponder the lyrics of several worship songs about God’s compassion. Consider “Mighty to Save” by Hillsong United.

Read over Isaiah 30:18 several times, even reading it aloud. The prophet Isaiah spoke these words to an unrepentant, rebellious people. Again and again, Isaiah had warned the people of Judah of the destruction and judgment that would come. But in Isaiah 30:18, God spoke to the people through Isaiah and clearly displayed His compassionate nature.

Therefore the LORD is waiting to show you mercy, and is rising up to show you compassion, for the LORD is a just God. All who wait patiently for Him are happy. —Isaiah 30:18

Ask yourself:

- God was actively waiting for the people to repent so He could show them His mercy and compassion. He was ready and willing to act as soon as they came to Him. How does this help you to better understand who God is?
- God is a personal, compassionate God, waiting for us to come to Him. How have you seen this aspect of His character in your life?

RESPOND

Has the Holy Spirit brought to mind something in your life you need to repent of as you’ve studied this passage? God is waiting for you. How will you respond? Record your thoughts or prayers.

THE POINT

God is holy and just, but He is also compassionate and ready to respond with mercy the moment we come to Him in repentance.

MEMORY VERSE

If you remember things you see better than things you read, look over Joel 2:13 and create a series of images in your mind to go with the key phrases. Replay your “mental movie” several times throughout the day.

- For further study, read the Book of Jonah. Jonah ran from God, but God compassionately pursued and rescued him.

TUESDAY

9.3

OPEN ARMS

PAUSE

Of all the things on your “to-do” list today, nothing is more important than hearing a word from God. Ask God to reorder your priorities and help you read and apply His Word to your life.

BEHIND THE STORY

On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, present-day Jews fast and pray, spending most of day in the synagogue. It is the holiest day of the year, during which the people confess their sins and seek God’s forgiveness. Toward the end of the day, Micah 7:18-20 is read. While we clearly see the gospel in these verses, Jews do not. Yom Kippur will be observed on September 13-14 this year. Spend some time praying that many peoples’ eyes will be opened to God’s forgiveness in Christ this year.

The Hebrew word for “compassion,” *rāham*, denotes a tender love, like the love of a mother for a child. What would it be like if this wasn’t part of His character?

18Who is a God like You, removing iniquity and passing over rebellion for the remnant of His inheritance? He does not hold on to His anger forever, because He delights in faithful love.

19He will again have compassion on us; He will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

—Micah 7:18-19

“Vanquish our iniquities” and the idea of casting our sin into the depths of the sea points to God’s forgiveness. In Christ, He has defeated the enemy of sin and taken away our guilt. It isn’t just out of sight, but out of reach, out of mind, and out of existence.

God is incomparable; no one and no other god can do what He can. Do you live like you believe this? Why or why not?

RESPOND

- Take a few minutes to ask the same rhetorical question Micah posed: “Who is a God like You?” Spend some time praising Him simply for who He is. Thank Him for your salvation.
- If you have never trusted Jesus for salvation, the astounding truth that God has defeated sin may not mean much to you. Read “The Gospel” on page 2 and respond to God’s invitation today.
- For further study on God’s forgiveness of sin, read Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34; Matthew 26:28; Acts 10:43; Colossians 2:13; and Hebrews 8:12.

THE POINT

There is no one like our compassionate God. Only He can defeat our sin and completely forgive us.

WEDNESDAY

9.4

BROKEN HEARTS

PAUSE

Think about a time when you were overwhelmed by grief. How did God show you His compassion during that time? Thank Him for His compassion toward you.

Think about that time when you were overwhelmed with grief again. How did you feel? How did you express your grief? Circle any words or feelings that apply:

scared

confused

overwhelmed

remorseful

upset

sorrowful

wanted to be alone

wanted to ignore it

BEHIND THE STORY

While the Old Testament often calls people to circumcise their hearts, this is the only instance it mentions tearing their hearts. This suggests deep grief over sin and a commitment to change. Living according to God's standard isn't about following rules, but rather submitting your life to His control.

You've probably grieved after the death of someone you love or the loss of a dream or relationship. But have you ever grieved or wept over your sin? Think about that as you [read Joel 2:12-13](#).

Tear your hearts, not just your clothes, and return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and He relents from sending disaster. —Joel 2:13

- In the Old Testament, tearing your clothing was a symbol of grief and repentance. What have you had to mourn over in your life in order to make a change and live differently? Explain.
- Joel said outward expressions of grief meant nothing if the person's heart wasn't changed. Think about this in relation to sin and repentance. How do you know this to be true?

THE POINT

Genuine repentance is more than just words. When we truly repent, God forgives because He is compassionate.

RESPOND

- Mull over this thought: *Real repentance is more than saying you're sorry. It involves a change in the way you live, think, or act.*
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and your life and reveal any sin that needs to be confessed. Truly mourn over it and repent.
 - For further study on repentance, read 2 Corinthians 7:5-11 and listen to "Why You Brought Me Here" by Andy Gullahorn.

MEMORY VERSE

Write the key phrases of Joel 2:13 on separate index cards or sticky notes, then mix them up and try to put them in the correct order. Play this game several times this today and throughout the week.

THURSDAY

9.5

A HAPPY FATHER

PAUSE

Put away anything that might distract you. Thank God for the day He has given you and ask Him to use this time in His Word to transform your life, desires, and actions.

Read the parable of the Prodigal Son in [Luke 15:11-32](#). What's your favorite part of the story? Why? Sketch your favorite scene or jot down a few ideas about why this scene captures your heart.

So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.

—[Luke 15:20](#)

Think through these questions:

- What does this parable teach you about God's compassion for you?
- The rebellious son left home with his inheritance and squandered it. Later, he "came to his senses" and went home, admitting his sin to his father (v. 21). What does this passage teach you about true repentance and God's response to it?

BEHIND THE STORY

In the culture of Jesus' day, it was considered degrading for an elderly man to run. But in Jesus' story, the father ran to his son and threw his arms around him. This is a picture of how God responds to us when we come to Him for salvation. God is eager to receive sinners. When we come in repentance, He responds with love, joy, and acceptance.

THE POINT

Because He is compassionate, God meets repentant sinners where they are. He celebrates when we return to Him.

RESPOND

God isn't passive when it comes to His children. He seeks us out, provides opportunities for us to respond to the gospel, and—like the father in the parable—is actively waiting for us to return to Him.

- If you are a Christian, take some time to thank God for the way He drew you to Himself and continues to work in your life.
- If you are not a believer, know that God will not force you to follow Him. But He longs for you to admit your sin and come to Him, something He celebrates with great joy. Don't let this opportunity to respond to His gospel pass you by.

FRIDAY
9.6

BEHIND THE STORY

Of the miracles of Jesus, the Feeding of the 5,000 is the only one recorded in all four gospels. The disciples approached the peoples' hunger with human wisdom and concluded they could do nothing to help. The lack of resources allowed Jesus the opportunity to display His power and show the disciples that God is not limited by what we can see and supply.

THE POINT

We must show compassion to those around us, reaching out to meet physical and spiritual needs.

ACTIVE COMPASSION

PAUSE

Start your time alone with God by considering this quote: "People may excite in themselves a glow of compassion, not by toasting their feet at the fire, and saying: 'Lord, teach me compassion,' but by going and seeking an object that requires compassion." —Henry Ward Beecher

Read Mark 6:30-43 in its entirety in your Bible.

So as He stepped ashore, He saw a huge crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then He began to teach them many things. —Mark 6:34

The Greek word used for compassion here, *splanchnizomai*, is only used of Jesus in the New Testament (Matt. 18:27; Luke 20:33; 15:20). It suggests more than pity and involves action. How did Jesus show compassion to the people? How has He shown it to you?

Re-read verses 34-35, 42. Jesus saw the peoples' spiritual need and met it, then recognized their physical need—hunger—and met it. What does that tell you about how you should reach out to others?

Consider Jesus' response when He saw the people and their needs and contrast it with the disciples' response. Which better describes how you view others? Why?

RESPOND

It is impossible for us to minister effectively in the world if we ignore physical or spiritual needs. We must work to meet both. Think about the needs in your church, community, or world. Which ones do you feel led to meet? Jot down two ways you'll take action to meet those needs this week.

Is there someone in your life to whom it is hard to show compassion? Pray for that person this week, asking God to help you see them through Jesus' eyes.

MEMORY VERSE

Draw your own comic strip or infographic depicting Joel 2:13. Make a point to read over it several times.

SATURDAY**9.7****BE LIKE GOD****PAUSE**

Spend a few minutes reviewing what you've learned about God's character this week. Thank Him for being a God who loves to show compassion to His children!

BEHIND THE STORY

Chapters 4 and 5 of Ephesians were written to help believers understand how their lives should be different after salvation. In Ephesians 4:17-24, Paul described putting off the old self and putting on the new. Then, in Ephesians 4:25-31, he outlined particular sins that should no longer characterize a believer's life. Ephesians 4:32-5:1 should be read in conjunction with these verses. If we are in Christ, then we should begin to exhibit His characteristics.

Do people often comment that you're "just like" one of your parents or another family member? Think about physical similarities, attitudes, or actions you often display that resemble that family member. Jot down a few of the things that come to mind.

Read Ephesians 4:32-5:1. As God's children, our character should reflect that of our Father. Underline the character traits that should be on display in believers' lives.

And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ. Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children.

—Ephesians 4:32-5:1

Ask yourself:

- Believers should be kind and compassionate to others because that is the example God has shown us. Does that describe you? Why or why not?
- We are to forgive others because God has forgiven us in Christ—who paid a great price so that our sin could be forgiven. Who in your life do you find it hard to forgive? Why?

THE POINT

As dearly loved children of God, we should want to be like Him, showing compassion and extending forgiveness to others.

RESPOND

- Look over the list of people you find it hard to forgive. Pray over the names one by one, asking God to help you to become more like Him and forgive so that the people on your list can come to know more about Him and His character through your obedience.
- Mull over this question: *If the only way people had to learn about God's compassion was your life, what would your life teach them? Would the way you live accurately represent God's character?*

MEMORY VERSE

Look over the various memorization tools you created this week or replay your "mental movie" of images associated with Joel 2:13. Now, recite it from memory.

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

THE PLAN

SPOTLIGHT: THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

Written by Paul, Galatians was possibly one of his earliest letters. He wanted to correct the Galatian churches and defend the truth of the gospel in the face of false teaching. The Galatian believers were being led to believe that Christians had to abide by all the rules of the law *and* place their faith in Christ in order to be saved. In Galatians 2:16, Paul clearly stated that we are saved by faith alone, not works or by following a bunch of rules. The letter is addressed to the churches of Galatia, a Roman province in what is now Turkey, but scholars do not know the specific locations of these churches.

PAUL AND PETER DISAGREE

Galatians 2:11-21 recount one apostle reproaching another. These verses give us some important information about confronting others in the body of Christ.

- In person.** If someone is doing something that harms the church or maligns the gospel, we must deal with the problem directly.
- Deal with hypocrisy.** Peter said one thing and did another. His actions told the people that salvation required more than faith in Christ, which is untrue. Christians shouldn't be hypocrites.
- Stand up for the truth of God's Word,** even if it brings conflict. Compromise on other matters, but never compromise the truth of God's Word.

SEPTEMBER 1

Proverbs 21–23
1 Corinthians 6

SEPTEMBER 2

Proverbs 24–26
1 Corinthians 7

SEPTEMBER 3

Proverbs 27–29
1 Corinthians 8

SEPTEMBER 4

Proverbs 30–31
1 Corinthians 9

SEPTEMBER 5

Ecclesiastes 1–3
1 Corinthians 10

SEPTEMBER 6

Ecclesiastes 4–7
1 Corinthians 11

SEPTEMBER 7

Ecclesiastes 8–12
1 Corinthians 12

SEPTEMBER 8

Song of Solomon 1–4
1 Corinthians 13

SEPTEMBER 9

Song of Solomon 5–8
1 Corinthians 14

SEPTEMBER 10

Isaiah 1–4
1 Corinthians 15

SEPTEMBER 11

Isaiah 5–7
1 Corinthians 16

SEPTEMBER 12

Isaiah 8–9
2 Corinthians 1

SEPTEMBER 13

Isaiah 10–12
2 Corinthians 2

SEPTEMBER 14

Isaiah 13–14
2 Corinthians 3

SEPTEMBER 15

Isaiah 15–18
2 Corinthians 4

SEPTEMBER 16

Isaiah 19–22
2 Corinthians 5

SEPTEMBER 17

Isaiah 23–25
2 Corinthians 6

SEPTEMBER 18

Isaiah 26–29
2 Corinthians 7

SEPTEMBER 19

Isaiah 30–32
2 Corinthians 8

SEPTEMBER 20

Isaiah 33–35
2 Corinthians 9

SEPTEMBER 21

Isaiah 36–39
2 Corinthians 10

SEPTEMBER 22

Isaiah 40–41
2 Corinthians 11

SEPTEMBER 23

Isaiah 42–43
2 Corinthians 12

SEPTEMBER 24

Isaiah 44–47
2 Corinthians 13

SEPTEMBER 25

Isaiah 48–50
Galatians 1

SEPTEMBER 26

Isaiah 51–53
Galatians 2

SEPTEMBER 27

Isaiah 54–57
Galatians 3

SEPTEMBER 28

Isaiah 58–60
Galatians 4

SEPTEMBER 29

Isaiah 61–63
Galatians 5

SEPTEMBER 30

Isaiah 64–66
Galatians 6

PATIENT



“*Patience*
IS THE
**COMPANION
of WISDOM.**”

—ST. AUGUSTINE

MEMORY VERSE

The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

—2 Peter 3:9

SUNDAY
9.8

THE REASON

PAUSE

Before you begin today's study, spend some time in prayer. Ask God to reveal Himself through His Word.

BEHIND THE STORY

The word *repentance* (v. 9) doesn't mean to just "tell God you are sorry." It's acknowledging and turning away from wrong behaviors. Jesus' words in Luke 5:32 are a reminder of His mission on Earth—to call sinners to *repentance*. *Repentance* is essential to knowing God and experiencing His salvation.

Write your own definition for the word *patient*. Include qualities and characteristics of patience.



Read and study 2 Peter 3:8-9 in your Bible.

Dear friends, don't let this one thing escape you: With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

—2 Peter 3:8-9

Ask yourself:

- How does your definition of patience compare to the concept presented in these verses? Explain.
- There is a reason for God's patience. (See v. 9). Why does His patience work to our benefit?
- Why is it important that God is a patient God?

THE POINT

God is not slow, as it sometimes seems. He is always patient toward sinners, giving us time to respond to His invitation.

RESPOND

- Meditate on verse 9 of this passage. Praise God for being patient with you and offering salvation through His Son, Jesus.
- For further study on waiting patiently for Christ, read James 5:7-8.

PATIENT adj.
Long-suffering;
steadfast;
slow to anger,
especially in
response to sin

MEMORY VERSE

Fill in the blanks
to begin learning
2 Peter 3:9:
The _____

does not delay His
_____, as some
understand delay,
but is _____
with you, not wanting
any to _____
but all to come to
_____.

MONDAY**9.9**

PAY ATTENTION!

PAUSE

How often do you really listen for God? Start your time with Him today in prayer, but also sit in silence before Him. Ask Him to help you hear Him speak through His Word.

BEHIND THE STORY

The Book of Nehemiah details the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. The central character, Nehemiah, served as the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes of Persia. After hearing of the sad state of affairs in Jerusalem, Nehemiah asked the king for permission to return and rebuild the city and its fortifications. The king granted his request and granted access to resources to finish the job. The walls were completely rebuilt in 52 days (Neh. 6:15-16).

Think about a time when you tried to warn someone about some danger, but that person wouldn't listen to you. How did you feel? Jot down words or phrases that describe that moment.

Often, we treat God's warnings the same way. **Read Nehemiah 9:29-31** in your Bible, then re-read verse 30. Because of the Israelites' continual disobedience to God, they were exiled to Babylon, leaving Jerusalem in ruins. Nehemiah served as the leader who worked to restore the city and lead the people.

You were patient with them for many years, and Your Spirit warned them through Your prophets, but they would not listen. Therefore, You handed them over to the surrounding peoples.
—Nehemiah 9:30

- Examine the Israelites' responses to God's actions. Why wouldn't they listen? When has that described you?
- The prophets' messages were inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the people ignored them. How receptive are you to the Holy Spirit's leading? What causes you to ignore it?

RESPOND

Despite persistent and repeated failure, God doesn't abandon His people. How has God been patient with you? Write a prayer of thanksgiving for His patience below, followed by a commitment to obey the Holy Spirit's leading.

THE POINT

Even in light of Israel's cycle of rebellion, God didn't turn his back on them. He was patient with the Israelites, calling them back to Himself. He does the same for us.

For further study, read Deuteronomy 30:11-20 to find out more about God's commands for the Israelites.

TUESDAY
9.10

PATIENCE=REPENTANCE

PAUSE

Let the wonder of God's patience toward sinners overwhelm you today by contemplating this quote: "How wondrous is God's patience with the world today. On every side people are sinning with a high hand . . . It is truly amazing that He does not instantly strike dead those who so brazenly defy Him."

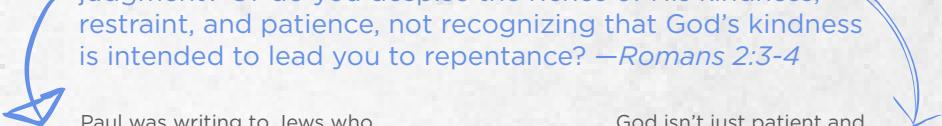
—A.W. Pink

BEHIND THE STORY

Many scholars see Romans 2 as a warning to the Jews not to assume that their national identity was enough to give them right standing before God. Many Jews believed that because they had historically been God's people, had the Law and supposedly kept it, that God would regard them as righteous. But Paul said everyone has fallen short of God's standard. It is only a relationship with Christ that brings salvation, not your family's faith or how good or moral you are.

God's patience is part of His character. But like everything in God's economy, that patience has a purpose. [Pore over Romans 2:1-4](#) in your Bible looking for that purpose. Underline it when you find it.

Do you really think—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God's judgment? Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? —Romans 2:3-4



Paul was writing to Jews who condemned the Gentiles for their wickedness while overlooking their own. His point was that everyone of us have gone our own way and will face judgment. Why would this have been vital news to the Jews? Why is it important to you?

God isn't just patient and tolerant with the Gentiles; He is patient with all people. This isn't careless oversight. He is patient in order to lead people to repentance. What does this reveal about God's character? Explain.

THE POINT

In God's kindness, He gives ample opportunity for repentance, but judgment is coming. Don't mistake His patience for approval of sin!

RESPOND

When has God's kindness led you to repentance? Journal your thoughts and thank Him for showing you such kindness.

For further study, listen to Chris Tomlin's "Kindness" on *The Noise We Make*.

MEMORY VERSE

Write 2 Peter 3:9 on an index card. Keep it in your pocket today and read over it several times. Try quizzing yourself as you attempt to recite the verse.

WEDNESDAY

9.11

BEHIND THE STORY

The “extraordinary patience” discussed in verse 16 suggests an attitude of moral restraint even when provoked. In His patience, God holds back overdue judgment and offers forgiveness rather than separation and lostness.

EXTRAORDINARY PATIENCE

PAUSE

Look over the previous days’ lessons. Take some time to praise God for what you’ve learned already of His patient character. Thank Him for meeting with you today.

When are you the most impatient? Think about the people, situations, and circumstances that most often trigger your impatience. List a few below.

It’s easy for us to place our own characteristics on God. Because we get impatient, we think He will, especially in light of our sin. Even as Christians, we often sin, but we don’t have to worry that God will get impatient with us and walk away. That’s not who He is. [Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17](#) to learn more.

But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate His extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life.
—1 Timothy 1:16

Ponder these thoughts:

- Re-read verses 12-14. Underline the words Paul used to describe himself before he came to Christ. What words would describe you before Jesus came into your life?

- According to this passage, why is Paul an example of God’s great patience?

- Paul obviously still marveled at the power of the gospel and the transformation Jesus had brought into His life. He knew how bad he’d been, so he understood the patience God had shown Him in forgiving Him and never giving up on Him. Have you ever felt that way about the gospel? Why or why not?

THE POINT

Paul claimed to be the worst example of sin, but his life gives proof of God’s great patience toward us. Jesus came into the world to save sinners and no sin is too great for forgiveness.

RESPOND

- Meditate on these truths:

Because God is patient, I know He can forgive and transform me, no matter the sin.

Because God is patient, I know that He will never be impatient with me.

- Do you live like you believe those truths? What changes will you make today in order to do so? List one idea below.

- For further study, read Psalm 40:1-3 and consider the benefits of God’s patience. Also, read “A New Way to See” in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, a story about Paul’s conversion.

THURSDAY
9.12

A PATIENT LIFE

PAUSE

What things are causing you to be anxious? Instead of worrying about those things, lift them up to God.

BEHIND THE STORY

The Book of Ephesians is a letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus to strengthen and encourage them. One of his key themes in the letter is the church. Chapter 4 stresses that unity should characterize the Body of Christ. That means that believers should have commitment, concern, and harmony with one another because of their common bond in Christ. How do you see this in your relationships with other Christians?

Think about the words patient and impatient. What attitudes, feelings, or other words and phrases do you associate with each of those words? Sketch or write your ideas.

Patient

Impatient

Read Ephesians 4:1-5 in your Bible, then read over verse 2 again. Underline the words that should describe your way of life as a follower of Christ.

Therefore I, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds us. —*Ephesians 4:1-2*

According to this passage, why is it important for Christians to exhibit this kind of character? Explain.

Patience is a vital part of maintaining unity within the body of Christ, the church. Do you think that statement is true? Why? How have you seen it play out in your church?

THE POINT

Because God is patient, you can be patient with others, especially within the body of Christ. Patience is vital to building unity in the church.

RESPOND

- There are probably people all around you who try your patience. Think about the people in your life or church with whom you sometimes grow impatient. What are some specific ways you'll choose to be patient with them this week? List two.
- Identify the triggers that cause you to be impatient, then outline specific actions you will take when tempted to respond impatiently.
- For further study, read Galatians 5:22-23 and to learn more about what walking with Christ looks like.

MEMORY VERSE

Writing something down can help you remember it better. Write out 2 Peter 3:9 several times today from memory.

FRIDAY

9.13

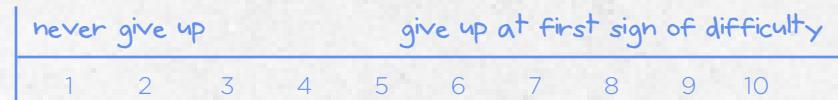
PROCLAIM & PERSIST

PAUSE

Think about how quick you are to give up when people don't respond the way you think they should. Now, thank God that He isn't like that.

BEHIND THE STORY

Paul wrote this letter as he waited in a Roman prison for death by execution. He was convicted for being a follower of Christ. The letter was written to Timothy, Paul's dear friend and the pastor of the church at Ephesus, as a sort of "passing of the torch" of leadership. Paul's letter was to remind Timothy of what was truly important and to encourage him in the faith.



Read 2 Timothy 4:2-5 to discover a difficult situation Paul knew Timothy would face: proclaiming the gospel to those who didn't seem to respond.

Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching.
—2 Timothy 4:2

Ask yourself:

- When should you persist in proclaiming the gospel? What would that look like in your daily life?

- What does it mean to rebuke, correct, or encourage with "great patience"? Who do you know who truly lives that out? Explain.

THE POINT

Because God is patient, wanting all to come to salvation, we must continue to share the gospel and encourage others with great patience and persistence.

RESPOND

Do you know someone who needs to hear God's message of hope? Have you tried sharing with them, only to become frustrated or discouraged? Commit to pray for anyone who came to mind by writing down their names. Ask God to give you opportunities to share His message with patience this week.

SATURDAY

9.14

WEAR IT

PAUSE

Take some time to look back over this week's study. Think about what you learned as you spent time studying God's Word. What stands out to you most? Thank God for speaking to you through His Word.

BEHIND THE STORY

When Paul wrote this letter to the church at Colosse, false teaching had infiltrated the church. Gnosticism was the problem—combining ideas from other religions and philosophies, emphasizing special knowledge and denying Christ as God and Savior. Paul combated this error by teaching the supremacy of Christ and His death on the cross.

Put on: Literally, clothe. In verses 5-9, Paul had outlined the sinful vices Christians should put to death. Here, he lists the qualities that should characterize believers.

Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

—Colossians 3:12

Gentleness: Refusing to demand one's rights; allowing the Master to control your power and rights. What's a real life example of this concept?

Patience: The capacity to bear injustice or injury without retaliation. This involves forgiving injustices committed against you. Does this describe your interactions with others? Why or why not?

Humility: An attitude that's free from pride and the need to make yourself the most important. Who exemplifies this quality in your life? Why?

RESPOND

Reflect on verse 12 of this passage. Who in your life needs to see compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience from you? Pray and ask God to work through you as you develop this kind of character in your life. Jot down one way you'll commit to live this out this week.

THE POINT

Truly living out God's patience means displaying patience to others no matter the circumstance.

MEMORY VERSE

Fill in the blanks to continue learning 2 Peter 3:9:

The _____ does not _____ His _____, as some understand _____, but is _____ with _____, not _____ any to _____ but _____ to come to _____.

SEPTEMBER 1-7: PRAY FOR YOUR PASTOR.

Your pastor is the leader of your church—and his job isn't easy. Pray for him personally, lifting up him and his family. Ask God to strengthen your pastor in his weaknesses, guide him as he leads the church, and encourage him. Pray that God would give your pastor wisdom, vision, and courage to follow God's leading. Most of all, pray that he will boldly declare the gospel and rightly preach truths from Scripture. **Scriptures to pray:** Isaiah 50:4-5; Acts 20:28-29; Colossians 4:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 5:8-9

SEPTEMBER 15-21: PRAY FOR TEACHERS AND OTHERS WHO SERVE THE CHURCH.

Thank God for the willing servants He is using to grow, encourage, and equip your church to do His work. Pray for those who teach Bible studies, lead small groups, or explain Scripture in any way. Pray that they would declare the gospel boldly and teach God's Word faithfully. Pray the teachers in your church live out the truths they're teaching. Spend time thanking God for the people who do the things at church that no one notices or wants to do—those who clean, deal with finances, organize volunteers for nursery, and various other ministries. Thank God for people who quietly display His servant heart and ask Him to reveal any ways He wants you to serve your church. **Scriptures to pray:** Acts 6:4; Galatians 6:9; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 13:21

THE GUIDE: PRAYER

**IN THE SPOTLIGHT:
PRAYING FOR
YOUR CHURCH**
SEPTEMBER 8-14: PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH LEADERSHIP.

Lift up those who are in positions of leadership in your church: associate pastors, your student minister, deacons, and other leaders. Spend time praying for their personal relationships with Christ and for their families. Pray for God's wisdom, discernment, and focus in their ministries. Thank God for these willing servants and the influence they have had in your life. **Scriptures to pray:** Deuteronomy 28:8; Ephesians 1:15-17; Colossians 1:9

It's easy to let our prayer lives become stale. Sure, we pray, but it's become more of a habit than a conversation. That's not the kind of prayer life God wants us to have. He uses prayer to align our hearts with His, deal with sin, and help us to experience the peace and wisdom He promises those who seek Him. As you pray this month, refuse to pray by rote. And as you lift up everything in your life—from daily choices to big decisions—set aside extra time this month to pray specifically for your church.

SEPTEMBER 22-30: PRAY FOR MEMBERS AND YOUR CHURCH'S IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY.

Pray for the members of your church. Lift up any prayer requests or needs you know about, asking God to work in those situations according to His will. Pray for unity to characterize your church. Seek God's guidance on your church's outreach ministries, praying that your church may be a "city on a hill" (Matt. 5:14) and that you will live out God's love to those in your community and world. Pray that God would give you a love for His truth and His gospel so that you can be transformed personally and help Him to transform the world. **Scriptures to pray:** Colossians 1:9-10; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 5:6; 1 John 1:9

Next month's prayer spotlight:
Praying for your school

WRITE IT OUT

Writing your prayers is a good way to focus your thoughts and really concentrate on what you're doing: talking to the one true God. This month, use these prompts, based on the ACTS prayer model, to guide your prayer journaling.

A: ADORATION

Tell God why you love Him. Praise His character.

Dear God, I love you because . . .

C: CONFESSION

Be honest with God about your sins and ask for forgiveness.

Father, forgive me because . . .

T: THANKSGIVING

Thank God for who He is and what He has done.

God, I thank you for . . .

S: SUPPLICATION

Pray for the needs and concerns of family, friends, your church, nation, and world, as well as your own needs.

Father, I know in you all things are possible. I lift up these situations and trust you with them . . .

PRAYER REQUESTS

Record prayer requests from friends, family, your small group, youth group, or church here. Then, assign each prayer request to a day of the week. On the allotted day, spend time praying fervently and often about those requests. As God answers those prayers, note how and when He answered.

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

NOTES:



WRATHFUL

WRATH

God's
ANGER TOWARD SIN.

GOD'S

CONSISTENT
RESPONSE TO SIN.

absolute

OPPOSITION

TO ALL SIN AND EVIL.

MEMORY VERSE



"The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him."

—John 3:36

SUNDAY
9.15

PROTECTED

PAUSE

Reflect on God's compassion and patience. How can a compassionate God also be wrathful? Ask God to help you understand the full scope of His character as you study His Word today.

BEHIND THE STORY

Although the book of Nahum is written to the southern kingdom of Judah, God's anger is directed toward their oppressors in Nineveh. Nahum comforts God's people as he promises them that those who hate and harm them will indeed be punished, and that their own suffering will cease. It's a reminder of God's fierce protection. Without God's intervention, the people of Judah had absolutely no chance to stand against their foe.

It's easy for us to think about God's love, compassion, and faithfulness. God is all of those things and more. But because He is just and holy, God is also a wrathful God. How does it make you feel to think about God as a God of wrath? List a few responses.

Now, **read Nahum 1:2-6** in your Bible. Read verse 2 again carefully. Underline the emotions expressed by God in these verses.

The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is fierce in wrath. The Lord takes vengeance against His foes; He is furious with His enemies.

—Nahum 1:2

- How would you feel if those emotions were directed at you? Explain.
- If wrath was not part of God's character, what would our world be like?
- God's wrath is not directed at His children, but at His enemies, those who oppose Him. God is always ready to defend and fight for those who belong to Him. Why is this an important truth to understand?

THE POINT

God's righteous response to those who oppose Him and His children is wrath.

RESPOND

God is passionate about protecting His people. He will direct His wrath at everyone and everything that opposes Him and His purposes. Nahum expressed those truths in a short two-stanza hymn. Write your own hymn of praise to God below, praising His character and power to defend and defeat all that oppose Him.

MONDAY

9.16

BEHIND THE STORY

Psalm 90 was written by Moses in response to God's anger toward the Israelites. God had freed them from slavery, but they repeatedly disobeyed and rebelled. Their faithlessness kindled God's anger. The ultimate result of their disbelief was wandering in the wilderness for the rest of their lives, instead of entering the paradise God wanted to give them. These people understood firsthand the cost of sin and the wrath of God.

THE POINT

God's holy anger toward sin seems extreme to us because we don't understand the horrendous destruction of sin. If we did, we would take our sin more seriously and live much differently.

HOLY WRATH

PAUSE

Think about what you know about God's character—holy, just, wrathful. In recognition of who He is, kneel or lie face down as you pray, asking Him to use today's Scripture to teach you more about Himself.

Read Psalm 90:7-12 in your Bible.

Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts. —Psalm 90:12

Read verse 12 again carefully, then answer these questions:

- Was God justified by His extreme anger toward the Israelites? (See "*Behind the Story.*") Why or why not?
- To number your days is to value them and choose to live in ways that please God because you recognize that life is short and know that God hates sin. Who in your life is a good example of that kind of attitude? Why?

RESPOND

God's righteous response to sin is His holy wrath. How would your life be different if your attitude toward sin reflected His? Journal your response. Ask God for wisdom so that you will "number your days" and live out your life in a strong, healthy relationship with Him.

MEMORY VERSE

As you begin studying John 3:36, look around your room for objects that symbolize the key words and phrases of the verse. Use these items as triggers to help you recall the Scripture.

TUESDAY

9.17

BEHIND THE STORY

The two seemingly opposite topics of God's righteousness and His wrath appear alongside each other in Romans 1 because they are inseparable. God can't be righteous and holy, and also turn a blind eye to sin. God hates the sin that separates us from Him and destroys us. He will stop at nothing, not even sacrificing His own Son, to free us from sin and bring us into fellowship with Himself.

NOT HIDDEN

PAUSE

If weather permits, go outside for a few moments. Listen to the sounds. Breathe in the scents. Take note of the details in nature. As you do, praise the God who created it and is revealing Himself to us through it.

The world's definition of wrath ranges from extreme anger to annoyance. When Scripture talks about God's wrath, it does not describe minor annoyance. If you were writing a definition for God's wrath as described in the Bible, what would it be? Write it below.

Read Romans 1:16-20, then re-read verses 18-20.

For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

—Romans 1:20

In verses 16-17, Paul pointed out that God had revealed His righteousness through the gospel. In verse 18, he begins discussing God's wrath. What is the relationship between God's righteousness and His wrath? Explain.

Verses 18-20 stress that no one has an excuse for not knowing God because He has revealed Himself generally through nature and specifically through His Word and through Christ. This is the truth that humans have suppressed (v. 18). Why do they do that? How do you see that in our culture today?

THE POINT

God has clearly shown us what He is like, and we cannot claim ignorance of His existence or power. We can accept or reject Him, but everyone must give a response.

RESPOND

- How has God revealed Himself to you through His creation, His Word, and ultimately through Christ? Thank Him for this knowledge. Journal your short prayer below.
- For further study on how God has revealed Himself through creation, read Psalm 19:1-4.

WEDNESDAY
9.18

LIFE OR WRATH

PAUSE

Ponder this quote to begin your time with God: "You're not adopted as God's child until you confess and turn away from your wrongdoing and receive the freely offered gift of forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus purchased with his death on the cross. Until you do that, you'll always be on the outside looking in." —Lee Strobel

BEHIND THE STORY

By affirming Jesus' identity, John explained the monumental role belief in Jesus, plays in a person's eternal destiny. Only Jesus can remove the wrath of God. Apart from Him, we have no hope of ever escaping it.

Pore over John's words in **John 3:27-36**. Underline any words or phrases that show you why Jesus is so important.

The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

—John 3:36

Re-read verse 36 again, then consider what this passage teaches you about what brings God's wrath and what brings eternal life. Record your answers in the appropriate column.

Wrath

Eternal Life

- According to John 3:36, there is no middle ground between God's wrath and eternal life. You can only be saved by trusting Christ. How do you sometimes find yourself trying to earn God's favor?

THE POINT

Those who have accepted Christ have received eternal life, but those who reject Him continue to live under God's wrath.

RESPOND

Consider in what ways you still strive to avoid God's wrath and earn His favor through your own merit or actions, rather than resting in what Christ has done:

Actions:

Words:

Thoughts:

Attitudes:

Today, instead of trying to earn God's grace, live in thankfulness for the grace you have already received.

MEMORY VERSE

Read over John 3:36 a few times. Then, close your eyes and picture the words in your head. Write them in the air or on a surface with your finger as you try to memorize it.

THURSDAY

9.19

PAYMENT MADE

PAUSE

Make sure you find a quiet place where you can be alone as you study God's Word. Before getting started, ask Him to help you understand His truth and to apply it to your life.

What are some things you couldn't do and stay true to who you are? What actions or attitudes would conflict with your character? List a few ideas.

BEHIND THE STORY

Throughout this passage, Paul relied heavily on sacrificial imagery and terms that would have been familiar to his readers. He clearly presented Jesus as the sinless sacrifice prefigured by the Old Testament sacrifices. For more on Old Testament sacrifices, read Leviticus 16-17.

God cannot remain true to His character and just ignore sin or sweep it aside. Because He is righteous, holy, and just, sin and rebellion cannot go unpunished. But, thankfully, God has made a way for us so that we do not have to remain under His wrath—His full fury against sin. [Read Romans 3:21-26](#) in your Bible to find out what it is.

God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.
—Romans 3:25

Sometimes translated “propitiation,” “sacrifice of atonement,” or “mercy seat,” the concept is that Jesus has become the sacrifice for our sin, turning God’s wrath away from us. How does it make you feel to know Jesus died in your place?

By believing in Christ and accepting His sacrifice, His righteousness can be applied to your life. When God looks at you, He sees Jesus’ righteousness. Clearly the only thing that has the power to save is the finished work of Christ. Do you believe this is true? Why or why not?

THE POINT

The immensity of God’s love can only be understood by recognizing His wrath toward our sin and His willingness to take that wrath on our behalf.

RESPOND

- Jesus willingly took God’s wrath on Himself on your behalf. Meditate on this. How will you let it change the way you live today and every day? Jot down one idea.

- If you have never placed your faith in Christ for salvation, you are still under the wrath of God. Prayerfully consider “The Gospel” on page 2. God’s invitation demands a response. How will you respond today?
- For further study on sacrifices, read about the Passover in Exodus 12:1-11. How is the Passover lamb a picture of Jesus’ sacrifice? How does reading this account give you a greater appreciation for what Jesus did for you?

FRIDAY
9.20

HELPLESS

PAUSE

Think of a time when you were absolutely helpless and needed someone to give you a hand. How did you feel? Thank God that He doesn't leave us helpless.

BEHIND THE STORY

Romans 5 assures us of God's great love for us by explaining that He chose to take upon Himself His own wrath, which we rightfully deserved. Verses 9-11 go on to tell us that in Christ, God declares us:

- **righteous:** right according to God's standard; our sins are removed.
- **reconciled:** our broken relationship with our Creator has been restored.

When you think about the word *helpless*, what images come to mind? Sketch your ideas below.

For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly.

But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us! —Romans 5:6,8

Read Romans 5:6-10 in your Bible. Read verses 6 and 8 again carefully, then answer these questions:

- In the context of this passage, what does it mean to be helpless? Explain.
- If no one can save themselves and we are all under the wrath of God without a relationship with Christ, what do these verses teach you about the importance of sharing the gospel?
- Clearly, the good news of God's great rescue is vital information. Is the gospel's importance reflected in your daily life? How?

THE POINT

We must share the gospel, because everyone who doesn't trust in Christ for salvation is subject to God's wrath.

RESPOND

- Think of people in your daily life who do not know Christ. List a few names below.
- Meditate on Romans 5:8, reminding yourself that Christ loved each of these people enough to die for them. Ask God for opportunities to show others His incredible love.

MEMORY VERSE

Ask a friend or parent to help you memorize John 3:36. Try reciting it to them. If it helps you to move while memorizing, toss a ball back and forth with your partner as you recite the verse.

SATURDAY**9.21**

PUT TO DEATH

PAUSE

Think for a moment about the sinful actions, attitudes, and thoughts from which God has saved you. Focus your heart by praising and thanking Him for saving you, forgiving you, and protecting you.

BEHIND THE STORY

The Book of Colossians is a letter Paul wrote to the church at Colosse. False teachers had tried to convince the Colossian believers that true spirituality required obtaining knowledge, adhering to certain rules, or having spiritual experiences. Paul directly opposed this teaching by reminding the believers that their life is hidden with Christ. He alone is their salvation. He alone is sufficient.

THE POINT

Because God is holy and we are His, we should continue to put away sinfulness so that we will become more like Him.

For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God.
—*Colossians 3:3*

Read Colossians 3:1-10 in your Bible.

- Read verse 3 again carefully. Write it in your own words.
- Based on what you have learned about God's wrath this week, why does His wrath come on the disobedient who live immoral lives?
- According to these verses, what sins should you put away as a believer?
- If you're a Christian, God has forgiven your sin, and you no longer face His righteous wrath against sin. So, why should you put these things away, if you're already saved from God's wrath? Explain.

RESPOND

- Look back at the sins listed in verses 6, 8-10. Which sins are still part of your life? Remember, you can be sinning in your thought life, even if you aren't physically participating. Confess these sins to God, asking Him to help you remove them from your life, once and for all.
- Be aware of the temptations that trigger these sins in your life. List ways you will deal with these temptations when they pop up in your life. Jot down one or two actions you'll put into practice today.

MEMORY VERSE

Select paper, a marker, or a dry erase marker in your favorite color. Write John 3:36 on the paper or on your mirror. Associating your favorite color with the verse can help you recall it. Attempt to write it from memory three times today.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

EVANGELISM

THE BACK STORY

You tell your friends about fun apps or amazing movies, but do you tell them about your relationship with Christ? Let's take a look at what Scripture says about evangelism.

1

EVANGELISM IS A COMMAND. Just before ascending into heaven, Jesus challenged the believers: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19). In 2 Peter 3:9 we're reminded that God wants everyone to come to know Him. This means we've got some telling to do!

2

GOD GIVES YOU OPPORTUNITIES. In Acts 8:26-40, the Holy Spirit specifically led Philip to witness to an Ethiopian eunuch. Paul and Silas recognized a God-given opportunity to share Christ when a supernatural earthquake flung open the doors of their prison cell (Acts 16:22-30). Throughout the New Testament, believers recognized the opportunities God gave them to share the gospel. God has placed opportunities in front of you as well. Pay attention, and you will see them!

3

GOD SEEKS THE LOST. In the Old Testament, God initiated the covenant with Abram (Gen. 15), and He freed His people from slavery (Ex. 1-14). In the New Testament, God Himself came down and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Jesus showed compassion to people caught in the act of sin (John 8:3-11), responded to deep theological questions (John 3:1-21), and healed the sick (Mark 2:1-12). Sharing the gospel takes on many forms, but the message is always the same.

4

EVANGELISM STARTS AT HOME. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, God commanded the Israelites to tell their own families His truths, every day, all the time. When the apostle Andrew met Jesus, the first thing he did was to find his own brother and tell him about Jesus (John 1:41). God can and does use mission trips to spread His gospel, but He also wants us to share Him with those closest to us.

ITINERARY

Want to share your story, but you're not sure where to start?

CHECK OUT THESE TIPS:

1. KNOW YOUR OWN STORY!

Write down your story in three parts: What your life was like before Christ, how you met Christ, and how Christ has changed your life. Review your story and make sure you feel comfortable sharing it.

3. LISTEN.

Although it's important to share, it's also vital to let the other person tell his or her story. Listening to the other person's perspective may change your approach to sharing, or it may even mean that you have to postpone sharing in order to build that relationship. Be flexible and pray for God's guidance as you listen to their ideas, fears, and concerns.

2. BE PREPARED.

You don't have to be a Bible scholar to help someone understand that Jesus loves them, but having some tools will help you through the process. Check out The Gospel on page 2, keep a "note" of the Romans Road passages on your phone (theromanroad.org), or carry a Bible in your backpack with key verses written inside the cover. As 2 Timothy 4:2 says, "Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not."

4. REMEMBER WHO SAVES.

Although God wants you to share what He has done in your life, it isn't up to you to save anyone. The Holy Spirit does that. Your responsibility is to be faithful to share, and to leave the results up to God.

REJECTED!

Sharing your faith consistently doesn't guarantee that people will accept Christ. Read through Acts for examples of early believers faithfully sharing the gospel and receiving all kinds of responses. Sometimes, people gladly accepted Christ, other times they got angry, and sometimes the listeners even threw them in jail or killed them. The believers continued to share, not because they got a favorable response every time, but because Christ had commanded them to do so. We must do the same.
—by Amy Keys

REDEEMER

"We MUST NOT OFFER PEOPLE
A SYSTEM OF *redemption*,
A SET OF INSIGHTS
AND PRINCIPLES.

We OFFER PEOPLE A
Redeemer."

—PAUL DAVID TRIPP

MEMORY VERSE

"For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last He will stand
upon the earth."

—Job 19:25

SUNDAY**9.22**

A GOD OF HISTORY

PAUSE

Turn off or put away anything that could distract you from focusing on God and His Word. Find a quiet place and sit in silence for a few minutes. Ask God to guide your study and prepare your heart.

BEHIND THE STORY

Isaiah was a prophet called by God to speak to the southern kingdom of Judah during a tumultuous time in their history. In this call to redemption, God sought to remind the sinful people of their true identity (His servants, His people) and who He is (Creator, Redeemer). Do you think today's world needs to be reminded of these things? Why or why not?

Read through Isaiah 44:21-23. As you read, record who is responsible for what action under each of the column headers below.

God's People

God

I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like a mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you." —*Isaiah 44:22*

- Look at what the people are to do in this verse and what God says He has done. How do they compare?
- Originally, this passage was aimed at the people of Judah who were worshiping idols. God wanted to remind them of who they were and Whose they were. Why would this be important?
- To redeem something is to buy it back, to pay the price. What does it mean for God to say that He is the Redeemer? Explain.

RESPOND

THE POINT

God is a redeeming God. Throughout history He has been working to redeem His people, buying us back from the power of sin.

- Mull over this question: *If redeeming us was not part of God's character, where would we find true, lasting hope?* Journal your response and praise that God for His redeeming character.

- For further study and context of this passage, read Isaiah 44:28-45:6; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; and Ezra 1:1-4. Compare Isaiah's prophecy about King Cyrus and the fulfillment 100 years later.

MONDAY
9.23

GOD, THE REDEEMER

PAUSE

Focus our mind on God as your Defender and Redeemer by listening to "My Redeemer Lives" by Nicole C. Mullen or one of your favorite worship songs.

BEHIND THE STORY

Job's story is presented in the Bible as a kind of test case for faith. Will Job's faith endure if God allows Satan to take away all that is precious, including his wealth, his children, and his health? Job even lost his reputation, as his dear friends insisted that his predicament had to have been the result of some hidden sin. This is why Job claimed God as His "Redeemer." The original word in the Hebrew often meant a "lawyer", someone who would defend the defenseless. Job believed that one day God would defend him against the baseless charges of his accusers.

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth."
—Job 19:25

- From all appearances, it seemed that God had truly let Job down. In Job 19:6, Job even claimed God had wronged him. How, then, can God also be Job's Redeemer?
- Part of the definition of redeemer is someone who acts on behalf of those in need or pleads their case. In this sense, how is God our Redeemer?
- Even in his affliction, Job was sure of God and his power to redeem Job and the situation—that God was able to do what he could not. Does that describe you? Why or why not?

RESPOND

- You may be in the middle of a situation in which you feel like God has abandoned you. In these situations, it's easy to confuse your feelings with what you know is true about God's character. Look at verse 25 and remind yourself of the truth Job proclaimed about God even when he felt abandoned. Below, write your own statement of what you know about God's character—and will trust rather than your own feelings.

THE POINT

God is our Advocate, the one who defends His people and will make all things right. We can depend on Him even in times of great affliction.

- For further study, read Proverbs 23:10-11 which describes God's work of justice as a Redeemer. Also, listen to "The Silence of God" by Andrew Peterson.

MEMORY VERSE

If you learn best by listening, read Job 19:25 aloud to yourself several times or create a voice memo on your phone you can play back several times during the day.

TUESDAY
9.24

OVER AND ABOVE

PAUSE

Take some time and ponder this quote from Josh McDowell: "If Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be, and He did die on a cross at a point of time in history, then, for all history past and all history future it is relevant because that is the very focal point for forgiveness and redemption."

It's not uncommon to hear about professional athletes having to pay enormous fines for bad behavior. **Read Ephesians 1:7-10.** How big is the penalty for our sin against God? What price did God pay to buy us back? Underline the answer when you find it.

BEHIND THE STORY

In the Old Testament, it was required that an innocent animal had to be sacrificed to atone for the sins of the people. This pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, the "innocent Lamb" whose blood would atone for the sins of those who believe. This reminds us that God's forgiveness might come freely, but it did not come cheaply. God, in His holiness, cannot "wink" at sin. Justice demands that restitution (full payment) must be made.

We have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

—Ephesians 1:7-8

Redemption: "Bought back;" carries the idea of being released from slavery. How is sin slavery?

through His blood: It is through Jesus' death—in our place—on the cross that God frees us from sin and its power. This redemption was costly. Have you ever minimized the cost of God's redemption? Why?

Lavished: To give something extravagant or be exceptionally generous. In Christ, God has shown us abundant and extravagant grace. Understanding the enormity of what God has freely done for you, what words would you use to praise Him?

RESPOND

- Take some time to reflect on your words of praise for God's lavish grace toward sinners. Toward you. By giving His Son, God secured your forgiveness from sin. Below, journal a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for your salvation.

THE POINT

Salvation may be a free gift, but it isn't cheap. God paid a great price to buy us back from sin.

MEMORY VERSE

Fill in the blanks to continue memorizing Job 19:25 (ESV):
 For I _____ that my _____ lives, and at the last _____ will _____ upon the earth.

WEDNESDAY
9.25

COSTLY REDEMPTION

PAUSE

Quiet your mind and heart as you prepare to study God's Word. Listen to "The Power of the Cross" by the Gettys or another worship song that helps you focus.

Think about your most precious possession. How much is this worth? If someone took it, what would you pay to get it back? Write your response.

BEHIND THE STORY

In some translations of 1 Peter 1:18, the word "ransom" is used rather than "redeem." A ransom is paid for the release of a captive, a concept that would have been familiar to Peter's first century audience. Slaves could sometimes pay a ransom and be released from their master. God released us from slavery to sin at a costly price: Jesus' death.

Read 1 Peter 1:18-21. In your Bible, underline the words "silver or gold" and "precious blood of Christ." In the margin, write *My value to God.*

For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.

—1 Peter 1:18-19

Ask yourself:

- What is the "empty way of life" referred to in verse 18? Explain.
- What are some examples of this empty way of life you see in our world today? In your life (past or present)?
- If God has redeemed you from this way of life, He has set you free. You don't have to live that way anymore. How do you find yourself slipping back into the habits of your before-Christ life sometimes?

RESPOND

- Re-read 1 Peter 1:18-19. What would change about the way you think about yourself if you fully grasped your worth to God? He purchased your freedom from sin with the highest treasure: Jesus' own life. How would living in the power of this truth change your daily life? Jot down a few ideas.
- Look at the list of "empty ways of life" you sometimes find yourself slipping back into. Pray over them, asking God to help you better understand the price He paid to set you free from their bondage. List two actions you'll take this week to walk away from these things.

THE POINT

God redeemed His people with the highest currency of Heaven: Jesus' blood.

THURSDAY

9.26

CHILD OF THE FATHER

PAUSE

Take a moment and walk outside and look up at the sky. Repeat these words to yourself: *I'm a child of God. I'm loved. I'm forgiven. I'm free.* When you return, write them down on a note and put it on your bedroom mirror or car dashboard as a helpful reminder.

BEHIND THE

STORY

Under Roman law, an adopted child was considered equal to all other biological children in the family. Even if the child had formerly been a slave, if adopted, a son could inherit legal rights to his father's property. As Christians, we are co-heirs with Jesus with all rights to all of God's resources.

Think about the difference between being a child and being a slave. In the space provided, sketch the images or list the words that come to mind as you ponder each concept.

Child

Slave

Now, **read Galatians 4:1-7**. Pay special attention to any references to adoption, sons, or heirs.

So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.
—*Galatians 4:7*

- What's the difference between a master/slave relationship and a father/child relationship? What rights or benefits do children have that slaves don't?

- What does it mean to be God's heir? Why is that important?

RESPOND

THE POINT

God redeemed us from the enslavement of sin and set us free to be His children.

The word "Abba" in verse 6 means "Daddy" and reflects intimacy and tenderness. That's the kind of relationship God wants to have with His children. Spend some time with your Abba today. Tell Him everything that's on your mind and pour out your heart as children do with their fathers. Thank Him that sin is no longer who you are. Record your conversation as a letter in the space provided.

- For further study, listen to the song "Child of the Father" by Cheri Keaggy.

MEMORY VERSE

Write the key phrases of Job 19:25 on colored index cards. Carry them with you and review them when you're waiting for class to start, standing in line, or just have a few minutes.

FRIDAY

9.27

SET FREE!

PAUSE

Begin your time with God today with a short prayer. Ask the Spirit to soften your heart to whatever God has for you to learn from His Word.

Read and study Colossians 1:11-14. As you read, look for the five benefits Paul listed that God gives to all believers.

List them here.

BEHIND THE STORY
Written around the same time, Colossians shares many similarities to Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. The primary focus of Colossians is to confront the "Colossian heresy," false teachings that detracted from Jesus' supremacy.

He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, in Him. —Colossians 1:13-14

rescued: Evokes the idea of God delivering His people from oppressor. Skim over the verses that precede these verses. What is God rescuing His people from here?

domain of darkness: In Scripture, darkness is often used to symbolize Satan or evil, while light refers to God. How has God rescued us from Satan's kingdom?

forgiveness of sins: Forgive literally means "to send away" or "cancel." In Christ, God completely canceled the debt of our sin. That means we can't earn God's forgiveness. In what ways do you find yourself trying to earn His forgiveness or favor? Why?

RESPOND

- Re-read verses 13-14 and ponder the word "transferred." To be transferred is to move from one place to another. As a Christian, you've been transferred from darkness to light, death to life. You have been placed in God's kingdom when you once lived in the Enemy's. Examine your life. What examples of this transfer do you see at work in your life? List two or three.
- If the examples of God's light in your life seem dim, prayerfully ask God to search your heart so you can deal with any sin in your life. Confess any sin the Holy Spirit reveals.

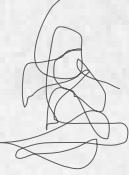
THE POINT

Because God has redeemed you, you are completely forgiven. You no longer have to live in sin's chains.

SATURDAY

9.28

MOTIVATION



PAUSE

Consider this thought: *Legalism says God will love us if we change. The gospel says God will change us because He loves us.*

Circle some of the reasons you try to do good works:

Feels good

Looks good

Makes parents happy

To help my future

Makes God like me

To impress someone

BEHIND THE STORY

While Titus 2:1-10 outlines the lifestyle believers are to pursue, verses 11-14 provide the theological basis for it. Because we have experienced God's grace and redemption, Christians want to live in a way that pleases the Father. That includes renouncing sin, living wisely, and pursuing righteousness. You cannot claim to have received God's grace if you are not actively learning to walk in His ways.

Read Titus 2:11-14. These verses outline what the real motivation behind your good works should be. Circle that motivation when you read it.

He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for Himself a people for His own possession, eager to do good works.

—*Titus 2:14*

Paul explained that the gospel not only gives us eternal life, but also restores us to the original purpose for which we were created: good works which glorify God. We are changed by God's work—and now free to live completely for God.

Ask yourself:

- The word rendered "eager" in verse 14 is sometimes translated "zealous" or "committed." This reflects a passionate dedication to pursuing the ways of God. How have you seen this principle at work in someone's life?

- Why is God's grace a better motivator for your obedience than fear? Explain.

THE POINT

We do good works not to earn God's favor, but because God has redeemed and changed us.

RESPOND

- How passionate and committed are you to pursuing the ways of God? Examine your life and your motivation for doing good works. Does it reflect a desire to please God because you know what He has done to save you or are you just following rules?
- For further study, read Ephesians 2:1-10. Ask yourself this question: *How does the gospel affect the way I live now?*

SUNDAY

9.29

SHOUT IT OUT!

PAUSE

Start your quiet time by listening to Casting Crown's version of "Blessed Redeemer," an old hymn that tells the story of the gospel. Ask God for opportunities to share God's grace with others this week.

Think about the things you post on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, or other social media sites. What are some of the things you are most eager to share? List a few below.

BEHIND THE STORY

As a punishment for their disobedience, God allowed Israel to be taken captive in Babylon (2 Chron. 36:15-23). But just as He predicted (Isa. 45:1-7), God raised up a king, Cyrus to set his people free (Isa. 45:1-17). This psalm specifically refers to God's deliverance of Israel from the distress in Babylon. His purpose in their redemption was so they could proclaim His goodness. Why does today's world need to hear about God's goodness?

Read and study Psalm 107:1-3. These verses point to something those who have been redeemed by God should be doing. Underline it in your Bible when you find it.

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His faithful love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim that He has redeemed them from the hand of the foe and has gathered them from the lands— from the east and the west, from the north and the south. —Psalm 107:1-3

Consider these questions:

- What do these verses teach you about God's character?
- Why is that good news that the world needs to hear? Explain.
- How has God been good to you? List some recent examples of ways you've experienced His goodness.

RESPOND

- Those whom God has rescued from sin should always be talking about His goodness. Look over the list you created earlier. Who in your life needs to hear how God has been good to you? Jot down a couple of names below. Commit to share with them this week!

- Read Psalm 107 in its entirety. This psalm details four different kinds of people who were in distress, yet God rescued them. Memorize the verses that speak to you.

THE POINT

God redeems His people so they may speak of His goodness.

MEMORY VERSE

Set Job 19:25 to a tune or melody to help you memorize the verse. It may help you to check out the old hymn "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth" by Jessie B. Pounds and James Fillmore.

MONDAY

9.30

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

PAUSE

Imagine what the world would look like if everything—including your life—were as it should be. Thank God that He is a God who redeems everything.

BEHIND THE STORY

Firstfruits is a word that's often used in Scripture. Generally used to describe the first part of the harvest, which was offered to God as a sacrifice, the word is used to denote a gift of God to His children in Romans 8:23. Christians have the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives as a foretaste of our full inheritance.

We all have a death sentence. Respond to that statement.

Not to be morbid, but that statement is true. Sin has infected our lives and everything in the world. Scripture tells us that creation even groans under the curse of sin. We know that one day all of this will end. Now, [read Romans 8:18-25](#) in your Bible.

And not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

—*Romans 8:23,25*

In your Bible, underline all the references to hope in this passage. As a believer, that word should stand out to you. As a Christian, you have experienced just a taste of the fullness of God's redemption, but you can live with hope because you know that you will one day experience *all* the benefits and blessings of salvation when Christ returns and establishes His Kingdom.

Now, [read Romans 8:18-25 again](#), this time from the perspective of someone who is not a Christian. How would that person respond to this passage? Jot down any words or feelings he or she might think or experience.

The news that everything will one day end is terrifying to those who have no hope. As a Christian, you have been redeemed and can live in light of the future hope of eternity

spent with God. But many in the world around you do not have that hope.

RESPOND

- If you knew the world were ending tomorrow, how would you react? Who would you want to know about the hope of an eternal future with God? Write the first few names that come to mind.
- List some ways you will share the hope you have in Christ with those people this week. Jot down two of those actions points below.
- Pray for a heart that is tender toward the hopeless, so that God can use you to reach those who still walk in darkness.

SERMON NOTES

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 1

SCRIPTURES USED: _____

MAIN POINTS:

Sketch or jot down your notes as the pastor teaches. Include questions, additional Scripture references, and anything else you want to remember.

CONSIDER THIS

Answer the following questions to help you process and apply what you've learned today.

How will these truths affect my daily life? Be specific.

What steps will I take to live out what I've learned?

Has God's Word and Holy Spirit revealed any sins I need to confess, changes I need to make, or actions I need to take? How will I respond?

SERMON NOTES

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 8

SCRIPTURES USED: _____

MAIN POINTS:

Sketch or jot down your notes as the pastor teaches. Include questions, additional Scripture references, and anything else you want to remember.

Consider This

Answer the following questions to help you process and apply what you've learned today.

How will these truths affect my daily life? Be specific.

Has God's Word and Holy Spirit revealed any sins I need to confess, changes I need to make, or actions I need to take? How will I respond?

What steps will I take to live out what I've learned?

SERMON NOTES

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 15

SCRIPTURES USED: _____

MAIN POINTS:

Sketch or jot down your notes as the pastor teaches. Include questions, additional Scripture references, and anything else you want to remember.

Consider This

Answer the following questions to help you process and apply what you've learned today.

How will these truths affect my daily life? Be specific.

What steps will I take to live out what I've learned?

Has God's Word and Holy Spirit revealed any sins I need to confess, changes I need to make, or actions I need to take? How will I respond?

SERMON NOTES

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 22

SCRIPTURES USED: _____

MAIN POINTS:

Sketch or jot down your notes as the pastor teaches. Include questions, additional Scripture references, and anything else you want to remember.

Consider This

Answer the following questions to help you process and apply what you've learned today.

How will these truths affect my daily life? Be specific.

What steps will I take to live out what I've learned?

Has God's Word and Holy Spirit revealed any sins I need to confess, changes I need to make, or actions I need to take? How will I respond?

SERMON NOTES

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 29

SCRIPTURES USED: _____

MAIN POINTS:

Sketch or jot down your notes as the pastor teaches. Include questions, additional Scripture references, and anything else you want to remember.

Consider This

Answer the following questions to help you process and apply what you've learned today.

How will these truths affect my daily life? Be specific.

Has God's Word and Holy Spirit revealed any sins I need to confess, changes I need to make, or actions I need to take? How will I respond?

What steps will I take to live out what I've learned?

**“MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH
and the meditation of my heart
BE ACCEPTABLE TO YOU,
Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.”**

—PSALM 19:14

REVIEW

Take a few minutes to review the memory verses you learned this month.
Use the cards below to help you remember what you've learned.

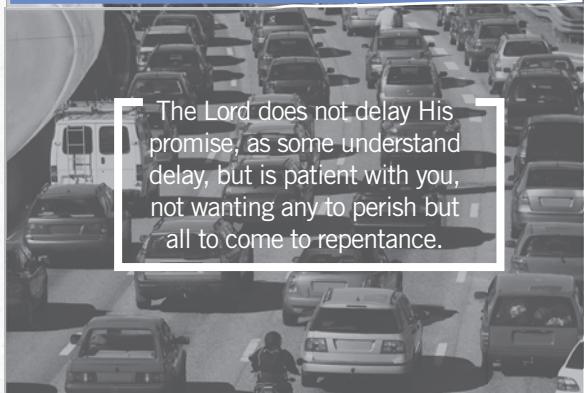
JOEL 2:13

Tear your hearts, not just your clothes, and return to the Lord your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and He relents from sending disaster.



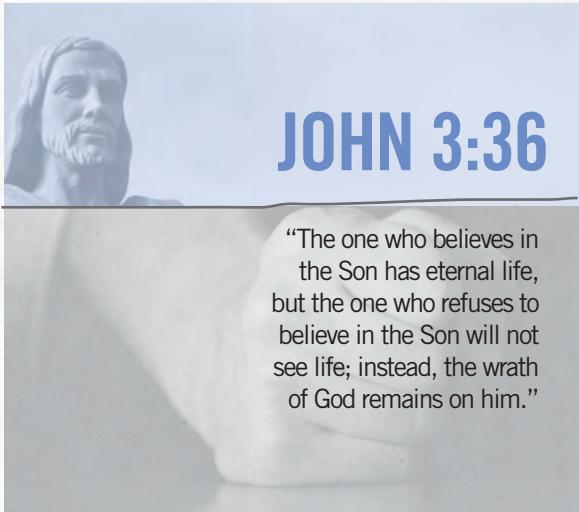
2 PETER 3:9

The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.



JOHN 3:36

"The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him."



JOB 19:25

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth." (ESV)



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