



# *A Solid Foundation*

21 Days to Strengthen  
Your Confidence in  
God's Character

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# Introduction

On a Monday afternoon in 2010, I was diagnosed with cancer.

When I woke up that morning, I had no idea how my week would unfold. I knew I would hear the biopsy results that day. But would I breathe a sigh of relief and return my attention to meeting the needs of my young family and my plans for the week? Or would life be forever changed, my calendar turned upside down, and my expectations for the following days, weeks, months, and years radically altered?

As I faced those unknowns, what really mattered was what I believed about God's character. Did He really love me? Was He good all the time? Was He in control, was He faithful to His promises, was He powerful in my weakness? Did He care about my suffering? My answers to these questions—and my confidence in those answers—would change the way I walked through the suffering which followed those biopsy results.

I don't know what your week holds, and let's be honest—neither do you. Whether you're in the midst of suffering or enjoying calm circumstances, I'd encourage you to stock your spiritual pantry now. Dig into what God tells us in His Word about who He is, what He has done, and what He promises to us. Strengthen your confidence in the truth of God's character. When the unexpected trials come, you'll be ready to cling to the truth.

I hope you'll join me for 21 days of seeing God's character revealed in His Word. I pray it will cause you to love the Lord more fully, depend on His promises more deeply, and face your uncertain future with greater confidence in His character.

# Day 1

On my first-ever ski trip, our church youth leader paired beginners with experienced skiers for our first run down the mountain. I was lucky enough to be paired with the guy who had dumped me just weeks before. As you can imagine, he wasn't too interested in skiing slowly beside me and offering words of advice and encouragement. He bailed after about five minutes.

I was tired, clueless, cold, and worst of all, alone.

In Daniel 3, three exiled Israelites, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, faced a much worse situation—the punishment of a fiery furnace followed their refusal to worship an idol.

After the men were thrown to the flames, the king's fury changed to confusion. "Wait a minute," he said, "how many men did we throw into that furnace?" Then he answers his own question: *"But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods"* (Dan. 3:25).

We all know how this story ends: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are pulled from the furnace without even a scent of smoke on their clothes. But we all know from experience that this type of deliverance isn't always God's plan for His people. Sometimes the flames of our suffering feel like they're killing us. We may not be pulled from the furnace until we reach heaven. So what can we take away from this story?

Dale Ralph Davis puts it this way in his commentary on Daniel: "Christ did not keep them out of the furnace but found them in it. He does not always shield you from all distresses and dangers, but it is in the loneliness, the betrayal, in the loss that the Fourth Man comes and walks with you."

God isn't like the 16-year-old boy who left me on the ski run. God will never leave you or forsake you. If you belong to Christ, you never walk through suffering alone. He has found you, and He will never leave you.

No matter what you face today, your Savior walks with you.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study.*

Joshua 1:5-9, Deuteronomy 31:7-8, Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 13:5

# Day 2

My grandpa loved to tell the story of letting my dad drive a tractor when he was a young child. My dad sat on his dad's lap with his small hands on the steering wheel as they drove over smooth ground. But when they hit a rough patch of bumpy road and the steering wheel bounced erratically, he would throw his hands in the air and yell, "Take it, Dad!"

In a similar way, our suffering causes us to cry out to our Heavenly Father for help. When life is smooth, we are often lulled into thinking we can handle things on our own. Then the rocky patches come and we have no choice but to throw up our hands and plead with Him to pull us through. When we do, we can have confidence that our Heavenly Father will be with us, because He is faithful to all His promises.

*"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." (Jer. 31:3b)*

When our suffering pushes us to deeper reliance on the Lord, we find He is there, gripping the wheel, guiding us through the hard times. Our greater reliance on Him is a gift He gives us by His grace. As we turn to Him in our suffering, we discover the depth of His love and faithfulness to us.

When my dad threw his hands in the air, he knew his daddy would be there to help. He knew his daddy knew what to do. He knew his daddy was strong enough to bring the tractor safely where they needed to go.

And because your Heavenly Father is faithful to keep all His promises, you know He will never leave you or forsake you.

You know He is all-wise and always does what is right.

You know He is all-powerful, and His strength is made perfect in your weakness. When you cry out to Him, He will be faithful to answer with all that you need.

No matter what you face today, God is faithful to keep His promises.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Numbers 23:19, Lamentations 3:21-23, Romans 8:25, Hebrews 10:23

# Day 3

“Would you still love me if I murdered someone?” my son asked recently, and it wasn’t the first time. He loves to push the hypothetical limits and find out whether my love would survive his make-believe crimes. My answer is always the same: “I love you because you’re my child. Because you’re mine. Nothing will ever change that. You’ll always be my son, so I will always love you.”

I tell my kids often that I don’t love them because they obey or get good grades or treat each other kindly. I love them because they are my children. Because nothing can change their status as my children, nothing can change my love for them. They didn’t earn my love, so they can’t lose it by failing to measure up.

Just as my children can’t lose my love, we can’t lose the love God has freely given us as His adopted children in Christ Jesus. Nothing can separate us from God’s perfect love—not our failures, not our suffering, not the evil in this world, not even death.

*“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38-39)*

God’s love isn’t dependent on our obedience. His love for us is rooted in our status as His children. Christ lived perfectly and died sacrificially for us so we could share in His inheritance as children of God. Because we didn’t earn God’s love, we can’t lose it by failing to measure up.

God’s love isn’t based on feelings. It’s established by His covenant promises, so His love will never stop because you’re acting unlovable. Nothing you do will ever change or lessen God’s perfect love for you.

God’s love is more powerful than our toughest enemy. The list of what can’t separate us from God’s love in these verses is all-encompassing. And in case Paul left something out, he finishes with “nor anything else in all creation.” That covers it all. Absolutely nothing can separate us from God’s freely-given, no-strings-attached, never-ending love.

No matter what you face today, nothing can separate you from God’s love in Christ Jesus.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalm 100:5, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:10

# Day 4

When my daughter was a toddler, she was playing with her favorite baby doll and her play kitchen. Cradling the baby in her arms, she opened the wooden microwave door and placed the doll inside, as if laying her in a crib filled with down pillows. As she pushed imaginary buttons, she spoke reassuringly, “It’s okay baby, I’m going to cook you now.”

Even if you hadn’t heard this story, you wouldn’t trust my daughter, at age two, to care for your baby. She clearly had no idea how to care for a child! Her babysitting skills would be wildly unpredictable. Even now, at age eight, I wouldn’t leave her alone with an infant for more than a few minutes.

But when it comes to caring for us, God is perfectly good. We can trust His goodness even when we don’t understand His ways—even when His plans make about as much sense as putting a baby in a microwave.

*“For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.”*  
(Psalm 100:5)

When we don’t understand God’s plans, we can trust Him because He is always good to us. His love for us will outlast any trial we face. His faithfulness to us will never end.

God is not like an unpredictable toddler. His goodness isn’t something He does when He feels like it—His goodness is who He is. He can’t stop being good for even a moment.

God has proved His goodness in many ways—in our lives, in His Word, and in history. The ultimate demonstration of His goodness was the Cross. God made the greatest sacrifice to meet our greatest need: He gave His Son for the salvation of sinners. He proved that He will go to any lengths necessary to meet the needs of His beloved children. Therefore, we know we can trust His goodness, even when our lives don’t make sense.

No matter what you face today, God is always good to you.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalm 34:8, Psalm 145:9, Romans 8:32

# Day 5

Nothing ruins my day faster than when my plans fall apart. I start my day with Plan A. I've got a schedule, a to-do list, and sometimes even a dinner menu. Then the needs of my family or friends, the weather, or unexpected circumstances knock me from Plan A to Plan B. Sometimes even Plan C or Plan D. As I work my way through the alphabet, my frustration grows. Adaptability isn't one of my strengths!

Adjusting our expectations for one day causes annoyance. But what about when our long-term hopes and plans fall apart? Maybe you're watching life circumstances stray far from your Plan A for yourself or your loved ones. You may wonder where God is in all of this. Is He powerless to stop this train wreck of suffering and grief? Has He stopped caring? What happened to His good plans for you?

In Job 42, the Lord had shown His power and sovereignty to Job after a time of intense suffering. The plans Job had for his life and family had completely fallen apart. And yet, Job says to the Lord: *"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted"* (Job 42:2).

Because God is all-powerful, His plans are never frustrated.

He's never on Plan B or Plan C.

His purposes for your life will always come to pass.

Pause and let this sink in for a moment. Nothing can prevent Him from accomplishing His will in your life: not your sin, not the sin of others, not even the brokenness of this world. No purpose of His can be thwarted.

We often don't understand what God is doing. His purposes don't make sense. We may be heartbroken or angry or frightened, and we can take those emotions to Him. We can have peace, knowing that He can do all things and will accomplish His perfect plans for us.

No matter what you face today, no purpose of God's can be thwarted.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalms 118:6, Psalm 138:8, Romans 8:31, 1 John 4:4

# Day 6

We were two college freshmen thrown together in a tiny dorm room by the luck of the draw. After a rocky semester of figuring each other out, we were forced to inhabit each other's space for hours on end with no escape. There were no classes, no meetings, and few parties that week to separate us.

We had one common goal: to pass our first set of semester final exams. Tension ran high in our third-floor dorm room as we sat on our matching hunter green bedspreads, surrounded by textbooks, notes, snacks, and caffeine.

One night, my roommate wrote out a verse and taped it to our wall: *"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (Is. 26:3).*

This verse got us through those sleepless nights of studying, and it has comforted me through many anxious nights since. When the cares of my heart are more burdensome than college exams, my peace has grown because of the verse that follows: *"Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock" (Is. 26:4).*

What struggles, relationships, or challenges are threatening your peace right now? When life overwhelms or confuses you, do you find it difficult to keep your focus on the Lord? I do.

When my peace is washed away by the waves of life, I can cling to the everlasting rock. My mind is not steadfast, and I struggle to trust Him. But the Lord is steadfast. He strengthens my faith and pours out His perfect peace into my troubled soul.

He is faithful, even when we are not. And as He pours out His peace over and over again, our trust will grow and our minds will be more steadily focused on the source of our hope and peace: the Lord, the Rock eternal.

No matter what you face today, perfect peace is found in the Lord, the Rock eternal.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study.*

Psalms 46:10-11, John 14:27, John 16:33, Colossians 3:15



# Day 7

Every May 1 for the last ten years, my friend Katherine has heard a knock on her door. She opens the door and feigns surprise when she finds flowers, calling out so the hiding children can hear: “What is this? Who could have left these here?”

My children cover their mouths to stifle their giggles, then nod at each other that it’s time. They run out shouting, “It’s us! Happy May Day!”

Katherine knows we’re coming every May 1. The tradition started more than three decades ago when she lived two doors down from my childhood home. I hid behind a tree in her front yard every May Day, holding back my laughter as she wondered loudly who left the flowers at her door.

Just as our May Day visit is no surprise to Katherine, God’s Word says our suffering should be no surprise to us. In John 16:33, Jesus told His disciples to expect trouble in this world. One of those disciples later wrote about suffering to Christians who were experiencing persecution:

*“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” (1 Pet. 4:12-13).*

We may be surprised by the cancer diagnosis, car accident, wayward child, or crumbling relationship, but God is not. He sees the end from the beginning, and every one of our days is written in His book (Ps. 139:16).

Be encouraged, friend. You can face suffering without fear, because God isn’t scrambling to figure out what went wrong. He’s not surprised or caught off guard by the trial that’s come upon you. He has a plan to use it for your good and for His glory, which will be fully revealed when Christ returns. Because Christ suffered for you, on that day you will be free of suffering forever.

No matter what you face today, God is not surprised by your suffering.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalm 56:8, Psalm 139:16, Matthew 10:29-30

# Day 8

The Great Breakup of January 1991 swept through Woodland Junior High like a social earthquake. One couple after another toppled, and it seemed no one was immune. Even the long-term couples couldn't withstand its force. When it was over, all that remained of the junior high dating culture was a bunch of brokenhearted adolescent girls, including me.

At the time, most of us who were dumped thought it was the most horrible heartbreak of our lives. But 25 years later, that pain pales in comparison to the heartbreak we know as adults. We watch friends endure illness, job loss, divorce, and death. We experience pain and loss ourselves. If we're paying any attention to the world around us, heartbreak is everywhere.

When sadness threatens to crush us, there is a place for us to seek comfort: in the arms of our Heavenly Father. Because He loves us, He cares for our broken hearts. He sees our pain and surrounds us with His love and peace. He will never leave us alone with our sadness. We can trust Him to lovingly mend our lives back together when the destruction of grief blasts through.

*"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." (Ps. 34:18)*

This truth isn't a platitude that sounds nice but has no real power. It isn't a band-aid we put on grief to make it feel better. Grief and loss are still painful, even with the Lord.

But as we run to Him with our broken hearts, we are surrounded by His loving care. He gently takes our pain, heals our wounds, and gives us the strength to go on.

We can face our grief without despair because we belong to the One who heals broken hearts. And we know that one day, there will be no more sadness when we are with Him in heaven (Rev. 21:4).

No matter what you face today, your Heavenly Father cares for your broken heart.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalm 56:8, Romans 5:3-5, Revelation 21:4

# Day 9

The year was 1983. I sat in Mrs. Miller's first grade classroom, facing an overwhelming task. With little six-year-old fingers, I painstakingly cut out 72 construction paper candles to assemble a birthday cake for President Reagan. It's the first difficult assignment I remember having as a child, and it wouldn't be the last.

Now we face grown-up challenges, don't we? We struggle with our relationships, our work, our health, and our finances. We privately wrestle with temptation, unbelief, fear, and doubt. God often gives us difficult assignments as we live as lights for Him in a world filled with sin, brokenness, and pain. But He does not leave us on our own.

The apostle Paul endured many hardships as he carried out his assignment from the Lord. He told the Corinthians he was hungry, thirsty, poorly dressed, homeless, and enduring sleepless nights in the cold (1 Cor. 4:11, 2 Cor. 11:27). During his ministry for the Gospel, Paul was beaten with rods, whipped, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, and threatened by a long list of dangers. On top of all that, he was burdened by his concern for the churches he planted (2 Cor. 11:28).

And yet, as he recalls these hardships in his letter to the Philippians, he says he found the secret to being content in these struggles. He tells them: *"I can do all things through [the Lord] who strengthens me"* (Phil. 4:13).

You can do hard things. You can complete the difficult assignments God gives you. You can walk through a challenging relationship, career, illness, financial situation, or temptation and emerge on the other side looking more like Jesus.

Not because you're mighty, but because your Heavenly Father is.

Not because you're strong, but because He gives you strength.

Not because you look inside yourself and find the resources you need, but because the Spirit of God lives inside you.

You can do hard things because the Lord is strong and mighty, and He is with you in your struggles.

No matter what you face today, the Lord gives you strength.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalm 121:1-2, Isaiah 40:30-31, Philippians 4:19

# Day 10

Quick, answer this question: what's 3 times 8?

As a parent, there are three major hurdles I've jumped with my kids: potty training, learning to read, and memorizing multiplication tables. All three of my kids have conquered the first two skills. My youngest is about to start her times tables. I expect she'll finish learning them in time for me to have a quick celebration before it dawns on me that none of them know how to drive. (Yikes.)

As an adult, we take it for granted that we know our multiplication tables. But for an 8-year-old staring at the giant table of 144 answers to learn, it seems overwhelming. Yes, there will probably be tears. For both of us. But the hours of drilling and repeating and chanting out loud, "3 times 1 is 3. 3 times 2 is 6. 3 times 3 is 9 . . ." *will* eventually result in my daughter instinctively knowing the answer to 3 times 8.

*"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (Jam. 1:2-4)*

In this passage, James reminds his readers that God has a purpose in their suffering. The testing of their faith will produce steadfastness, and steadfastness will lead to spiritual maturity. James says we should count it all joy when our trials produce these traits in us.

Steadfastness and spiritual maturity may feel about as exciting to you as learning multiplication tables. But from the Lord's perspective, our steadfastness is beautiful. Just as my daughter's time memorizing math facts will not be wasted, your suffering will not be wasted.

Your struggles will produce God's desired effect: the growth of your faith and character, your perseverance in hope, and your full equipping for the next task God has for you. And from an eternal viewpoint, that's a great reason to rejoice!

No matter what you face today, God will use your suffering to produce steadfastness.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Romans 5:3-5, Romans 8:18, 1 Peter 1:6-7

# Day 11

It's happened to me twice now, and each time it's surprising and impactful.

I pull up to the Starbucks window and learn that my grande, non-fat, one-pump-caramel latte was paid for by the driver in front of me. It feels strange to receive my drink without giving anything to the cashier. But I accept the gift of a free latte because someone I don't know paid the debt I owed.

My free latte is also a beautiful picture of the Gospel.

*"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1)*

If you're like me, condemnation is not a word you like to discuss. But God's Word is clear that we are all sinners, and our sin deserves God's punishment.

So how can Romans 8:1 say there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? Has God decided to look the other way? Did He change His mind about sin? Is He just being nice?

There is no condemnation because Someone else paid for our sin.

On the cross, Jesus took the punishment our sin deserved. God is fully satisfied with Jesus's sacrifice and will not demand payment from those who are in Christ. Our debt has been paid. We freely receive the gift of God's grace.

As we drink deeply of His grace, we are set free from trying to convince God and others that we're good enough.

We don't have to keep score, compare ourselves to others, and hope to be a little better than the next guy.

We don't have to keep striving, constantly check our balance sheet, and hope the good works will outnumber the bad.

When Jesus took your punishment, He gave you His perfect, sinless record. If you are in Christ, when God looks at your life, He sees the perfect righteousness of Christ. You can walk in the joy and freedom of God's grace.

No matter what you face today, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Romans 6:23, Galatians 2:20-21, Ephesians 2:4-9

# Day 12

A few years ago, someone broke into my parents' house while they were at work. The thief couldn't carry much on his way out of the small bathroom window, so the most valuable item he stole was their iPad. Weeks later, the iPad turned up at a local pawn shop.

You'd think that if something was stolen from you and later found, it would be returned to you free of charge. But my dad actually had to go to the pawn shop and buy back his own iPad.

It reminds me of what God has done for us. We are His treasured possession, but we allowed ourselves to be led away from Him by our sin. Because we are precious to Him, God sent His Son to buy us back.

*"In [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7)*

Throughout Scripture, we see our need for a redeemer, because we can't redeem ourselves. If we go back to my stolen iPad analogy, the iPad didn't pay the pawn shop for its freedom. The iPad couldn't pay its own way. Likewise, we are unable to redeem ourselves—we need someone who can pay the debt we owe.

Jesus Christ accomplishes the redemption we need. According to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, redeem means "to buy back" or "to free from captivity by the payment of a ransom." On the cross, Jesus paid the ransom to buy us back and free us from slavery to our sin. The cost was His own blood shed for us.

Our redemption flows from the riches of God's grace. Because God is rich in grace and mercy, He can pay the price to redeem us. He can forgive all our sins. He's not just merciful—He's rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4). And since we are His children, we benefit from His riches.

No matter what you face today, God redeems you by the riches of His grace.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Romans 3:23-24, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13, Hebrews 9:13-15

# Day 13

Imagine a criminal breaks into your home and steals not just your iPad, but all that you own. He robs you blind, showing his disdain for you, your family, and your belongings. You find yourself in a courtroom, watching him being sentenced to death for his crimes. (I realize it's a harsh punishment for robbery, but stick with me a minute.) And then the judge gives you a choice. You can die in the criminal's place.

I would die for those I love the most, but I have to admit—the list is short. For whom would you give your life? Would you die for a criminal who hated you and stole from you? What if the choice was between the criminal's life or your child's life? Would you give up your son or daughter to spare the criminal? I wouldn't.

But God did.

*"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:6-8)*

There is no greater love than this. While we were yet sinners and enemies of God, Christ died for us.

God proved His love on a real day in history, when a real man who was also the Son of God bled and died to save us from God's wrath. Even though we had committed the crimes, God the Father poured out the punishment for our crimes on God the Son.

The Father did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up so His enemies could become His children (Rom. 8:32). Those who were enemies of God have now been brought near to Him (Eph. 2:13).

No matter what you face today, God proved His love when Christ died for you.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Romans 8:32, Ephesians 2:12-13, Colossians 1:13-14

# Day 14

As Hurricane Irma barreled through the Caribbean in September 2017, I received an email from a friend letting us know how the hurricane could affect her four-year-old daughter in Haiti.

You might be wondering, why does my friend have a young daughter in Haiti, riding out a hurricane with other orphans rather than with her family?

My friend and her husband are in the process of adopting their daughter. They've been to meet her, she's called them Mama and Papa, and she belongs to them. But due to paperwork and bureaucracy, they haven't yet brought her home. She's no longer an orphan, but she still feels the pain of separation from her Mama and Papa.

This difficult situation serves as a beautiful picture of our life in Christ. We've been adopted. God signed our adoption papers with the blood of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, bringing many sons and daughters into His family. We're not home yet, but we are a part of God's household.

*"[God] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will."*  
(Eph. 1:5)

As adopted children, we share in the benefits and inheritance of God's family. Adoption is a legal proceeding that gives the adopted child the same rights and privileges as a biological child. And as God's adopted children, we share in a glorious inheritance with Christ.

We who have been adopted call God our Father just as Jesus did. Romans 8:15 says we've received the Spirit, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" These are the same words Jesus used in Mark 14:36 when He cried out in prayer. Because we've been adopted, we can approach our Abba Father with confidence that He hears us and cares for us.

The Greek word that is translated "purpose" in this verse could also be translated "good pleasure." God delights in making us His sons and daughters.

No matter what you face today, God delights in bringing you into His family.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study.*

Romans 8:14-18, Galatians 4:4-7, 1 John 3:1



# Day 15

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to pinpoint the sin of others? Several years ago, I talked with my son about how we all struggle with idolatry. We put people, ideas, possessions, or goals on the throne of our heart, where God alone belongs. I hoped it would encourage serious soul-searching. But my little Star Wars fan replied, “Darth Vader worships an idol. He loves his light saber more than the good guys.”

Where are you tempted to place your trust? You probably don’t worship a light saber. But anything you put your hope in besides the Lord will ultimately fail you — whether it’s “me time,” your abilities and success, financial security, comfort, the approval of others, or your perceived control over your life. These false gods are attractive, but they’re inferior to the one true, living God.

When we’re lured by these inferior gods and they disappoint us, God’s Word gives us good news. We’ve been given a better source of hope!

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Peter 1:3)*

Our true hope is in our Savior. None other is worthy of our worship and trust. None other can compare to the living, victorious, lasting hope He gives.

Our hope is a living hope. The difference between the Lord Jesus and any other god is that Christ is risen. His resurrection is the guarantee that our hope is not in vain.

Our hope is a victorious hope. Christ has conquered the toughest enemies we face — sin and death. We can face the days ahead knowing that our future is secure in Him.

Our hope is a lasting hope. The risen Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). This hope will never disappoint us, and it will last forever.

No matter what you face today, Christ’s resurrection gives you a living hope.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalm 62:5-7, Romans 15:13, Hebrews 6:18-20

# Day 16

I stood at the kitchen sink with my face in my hands while my two little boys ran circles around me and the newborn cried from her crib. I had just learned that a close family member had been diagnosed with cancer. As I looked around the chaos of my life as a young mom, I wondered, *How can I possibly help? What can I do to support her? I have no idea what to do.*

Later that month, I came across a treasure in the book of 2 Chronicles 20. In this chapter, the king of Judah hears that three armies have united against him and are on their way to attack. The people all gather together in the temple, standing with their families, and, I imagine, shaking with fear. King Jehoshaphat cries out to the Lord, praises Him for His sovereignty and power, and asks for deliverance from the only One who can offer it:

*“O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chron. 20:12).*

This passage became a lifeline for me as our extended family walked through cancer that summer. I had no idea God was teaching me to keep my eyes on Him in hard times because I would face my own cancer battle the following year.

I often don't know what to do, whether I'm dealing with illness, parenting struggles, or those pesky everyday priorities. But through it all, there is One who is more powerful than our strongest enemy, possesses all the wisdom we could ever need, and keeps all His promises to us.

When you don't know what to do, keep looking to Him. Keep crying out to Him and depending on His promises and strength. Just as He defeated the enemies of His people on that day thousands of years ago, He will give you wisdom and strength when you have no idea what to do.

No matter what you face today, keep your eyes on your faithful and mighty Father.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Job 12:13, Psalm 147:5, James 1:5

# Day 17

It was the moment every performer dreads. My daughter sat at the grand piano in front of a hushed crowd, staring at her hands on the keys. There was no music in front of her, and her brain refused to bail out her stymied fingers. She was stuck halfway through her recital piece.

After a long pause and a couple of false starts, she finished the song and took a bow. But in her mind, it was a disaster. A catastrophe. The Most Embarrassing Moment Ever in her seven short years of life.

Can you guess what she did next? She ran straight to me. She climbed into my lap, buried her face in my chest, and cried. She didn't run to her brothers, who were seated in the front row with the other performers. She didn't run to the strangers in the audience seated right behind them. She didn't even run to her piano teacher, whom she adores.

She ran to the one who knows her best.

Where do you run for comfort or refuge when life hurts? If I'm honest, I often run to a friend, to Facebook, or to a bag of popcorn. I forget the One who knows me in a way no one else does. My Heavenly Father knows my troubles and invites me to find refuge in Him.

*"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him." (Nab. 1:7)*

This verse gives us three reasons to run to the Lord with our troubles:

The Lord is good. It's simple, but profound. He is unfailingly good. He will not disappoint us.

The Lord is a stronghold. He is a sure and steadfast anchor we can cling to in our struggles. He has the power we need to withstand the storm of our suffering.

The Lord knows us. He knows our needs. He knows our suffering. He knows our past, present, and future. He knows.

No matter what you face today, the Lord knows your troubles—so take refuge in Him.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalms 46:1-3, Psalm 63:7-8, John 10:14

# Day 18

My hairstylist and I chatted as I sat in her chair, discussing my next appointment and whether it was time to refresh my salon-induced highlights. That's when she first mentioned the "fair hairs" that were starting to show near my scalp. It took me a minute to realize what she meant. Those aren't fair hairs, they're *gray*—and they're popping up everywhere.

My 40<sup>th</sup> birthday is rapidly shrinking in the rear-view mirror, which is exciting for a cancer survivor like me. But at this age, there's no denying the unstoppable force of aging. I can cover the evidence with anti-aging face cream, hair dye, and strategic wardrobe choices, but the truth is that this body is fading.

As my body deteriorates, there's one thing I can count on: God's given me an inheritance in Christ that will never diminish.

*"According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." (1 Pet. 1:3b-4)*

By faith, we've been given a living hope: Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead. Our living hope isn't just theoretical—it guarantees an inheritance we will receive. And this verse makes some shocking claims about that inheritance.

Your inheritance is imperishable. It's not like the rotting bag of lettuce in your refrigerator produce drawer that you never got around to eating. The treasure waiting for you in heaven will last forever.

Your inheritance is undefiled. It's perfect and pure, and no one can taint it. It has been secured for you by Christ, and so it reflects His perfection and doesn't depend on your righteousness.

Your inheritance is unfading. It can't be diminished in any way. It will not lose its value as you struggle through this life by faith, waiting to receive it.

Your inheritance is kept in heaven for you—because of Christ, your living hope, you can look forward to a glorious future!

No matter what you face today, God has an imperishable inheritance for you.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Psalms 73:25-26, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 1 Peter 5:10

# Day 19

“Where are you from?”

During the first year my husband and I lived in Indianapolis, I heard this question more than any other. After 24 years of living in the South, my speech sounded strange in the Midwest. I couldn't hide the fact that I was a transplant—my Southern accent gave me away instantly. I wasn't a Midwesterner. I was clearly from somewhere else.

If you are in Christ, you should stick out in this world just like a Southern girl saying “y'all” in Indiana. You aren't from around here. At your core, you're not an Arkansan or a Texan or a Hoosier or even an American. Even though you're residing on Earth, you're a Heavener. (Did I just make up a word?) Your citizenship is in heaven, because your life is hidden with Christ, and that's where He is (Col. 3:3).

*“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” (Phil. 3:20-21)*

These verses tell us about the glorious homecoming we anticipate as we endure the brokenness of this life. Our Savior is coming to take us to Heaven. We look forward to the day when Jesus returns and takes His redeemed people home with Him.

We also see that our bodies will be transformed. Jesus gave up His glorious existence with the Father to take on a breakable human body (Phil. 2:6). The opposite will be true of you someday. You will trade your broken, frail body for a glorious body like His.

The same power that will transform our bodies will put the supremacy of Jesus Christ on display. He will prove His victory over all things—even the sin, evil, and death that plague us in this home-away-from-home.

No matter what you face today, your citizenship is in Heaven.

*Additional scripture for reflection and study*

John 17:15-16, 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, Colossians 3:1-4

# Day 20

If you ask my 11-year-old son what he would wish for if he had three wishes, you'd hear a couple wishes you'd expect: unlimited Minecraft-playing time, no more homework ever. But he'd probably include one wish that might surprise you: his wish that Jesus would come back today.

My son can't wait for Jesus to return. Maybe it's because he watched me suffer through cancer. He's watched as old age ravaged the bodies of his great-grandparents and our church family endured the loss of a young child. He understands that he lives in a broken world filled with sickness, sadness, and death.

But my son also understands that he does not live in this broken world without hope. He knows there is a perfectly joyous ending coming. He knows that every heartache he feels will be made right when Jesus returns in glory. He knows His Savior will wipe away every tear.

*"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:4)*

God gives us this promise to cling to: sadness, death, illness, and pain will end when Christ returns. Tears will never again touch the cheeks of those who are in Him (Rev. 21:4).

As Tim Keller says in his book, *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*: "Isn't it possible that the eventual glory and joy we will know will be infinitely greater than it would have been had there been no evil? What if that future world will somehow be greater for having once been broken and lost?"

This truth doesn't eliminate our suffering, but it gives us hope in the midst of it. Life in this broken world hurts us now. But one day soon, the pain we feel now will serve only to increase our joy as we bask in Christ's glorious triumph over all that hurt us.

No matter what you face today, your triumphant Savior will wipe away your tears.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Isaiah 35:10, Acts 1:9-11, Revelation 7:15-17

# Day 21

My husband opened the front door to see two small boys holding a shoebox of rocks. They confidently made their sales pitch: rocks for sale, five cents each. Knowing my tendency to buy everything neighborhood kids are selling, my husband asked them, "Have you successfully sold your rocks here before?" They nodded, and my husband knew he would soon be the owner of a few new rocks.

Those young rock salesmen targeted our house, hoping to make a sale as they had in the past. They expected to find the same willingness to pay a nickel for a rock from their yard as they had seen the week before. As God's children, we can also expect His character to remain the same. He never changes.

*"For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6)*

God loves you just as much today as the day His Son died on the cross for you.

He demonstrates the same faithfulness now as when He carried you through a difficult time.

His goodness and generosity in meeting all of your needs will be the same no matter how challenging your circumstances.

You can rest securely in His arms, because He won't be different next year or ten years from now or a thousand years from now. The Lord never changes.

Because God never changes, we can trust His character and His promises. He doesn't change His mind. He doesn't waver for even one second in the perfection of His goodness, sovereignty, mercy, power, wisdom, and love. We can put our confidence in His changeless character.

When you pin your hopes on Him, you're not throwing darts at a moving target and hoping one sticks. You're holding onto a steadfast Rock that stands firm through the ages.

No matter what you face today, God's character never changes.

## *Additional scripture for reflection and study*

Numbers 23:19, Psalm 102:25-27, Hebrews 13:8, James 1:17

# About the Author

Marissa Henley is a Christ-follower, wife, mom, and cancer survivor who writes about God's character, suffering, and friendship at [www.marissahenley.com](http://www.marissahenley.com). She is the author of *Loving Your Friend Through Cancer*, coming in May 2018 from P&R Publishing. Most days, you'll find her drinking a latte while shuttling her three kids around in a minivan, wondering if the dog will ever learn to stay and if she'll ever love cooking as much as her husband loves eating.

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