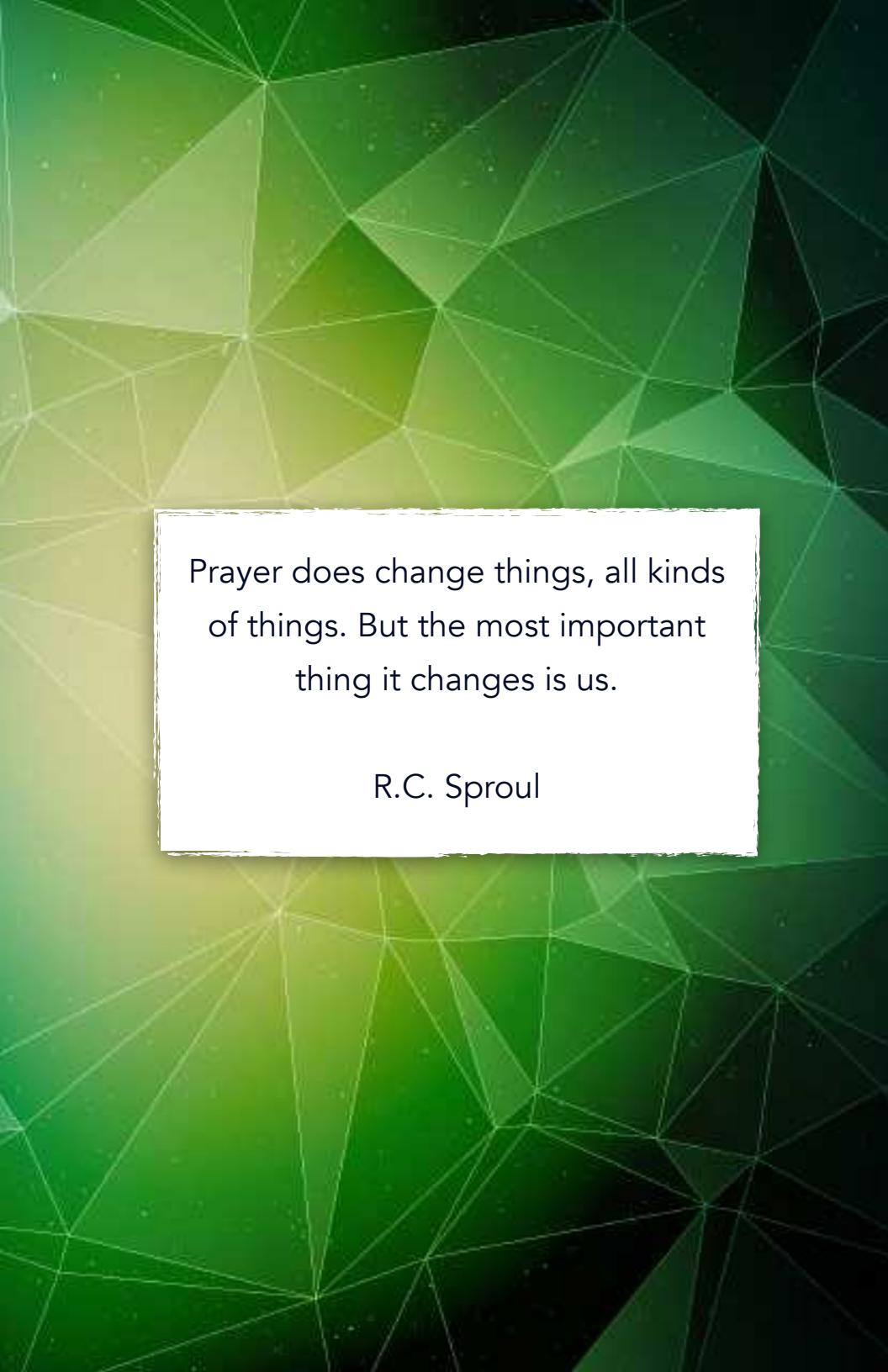




21 Days of Prayer 2023



The background is a complex, abstract pattern of green triangles and polygons, creating a low-poly or crystalline effect. The colors range from a bright, lime green on the left to a dark, forest green on the right. A white rectangular box with a slightly distressed or hand-drawn border is centered on the page, containing the text.

Prayer does change things, all kinds
of things. But the most important
thing it changes is us.

R.C. Sproul

Worship is an unexplainable bridge between finite humans and our Eternal God. As we step onto this otherworldly span, we leave behind the chaos of the fallen and move toward goodness and peace. I envision violent crowds and lustful solicitors, although stranded on land, still screaming for our attention and waving for us to come back and engage “just one more time”. But each small step across this bridge of worship lowers the volume of the thousand voices, allowing us to hear from the other side.

Then, somewhere toward the middle of this suspended structure, we begin to feel the Presence of our Father. We sense His overwhelming light as it begins to overcome the darkness and push away the shadows. Stepping further beyond the fog, we see Him standing encompassed in an extraterrestrial brilliance. We begin to hear the shouts of a Dad yelling to his kids words of affirmation and encouragement. We feel the release of loss and pain, if only for the length of a familiar chorus or old hymn. And although we cannot stay here, and it is not quite time to cross fully to the other side, we are emboldened to take on another day, to love another hater, and bless another tempter.

We are inviting you to join us for prayer and worship **EVERY DAY for the next 21 days**. Each devotional in this booklet focuses on a different aspect of worship and how it can lead us toward a clearer, more intimate relationship with God. For each day, turn on a 21 minute timer, read the devotional and spend time praying and worshipping God. On Wednesday nights we will pray together as a church seeking Him and worshipping together.

I am praying for everyone who is taking on this 21 day challenge. May it bring answers, intimacy, gratefulness and connection with an amazing God!

Worshipping,
Dusty

Jesus' ministry was full of stories and fables — fictional concoctions meant to stir the soul and provide insight for generations to come. Still, it must have been a bit confusing at the time. In my imagination, I can hear the disciples saying, "What did he just say? Surely I didn't hear that right!?" I picture Peter, in a dirty tunic and sandals, casting a sideways glance at James and John, his eyes slightly wider than usual, whispering...

"Does he really want us to eat his body and drink his blood?" (John 6:53-58)

or

"OK, which soil are we, then?" (Matt 13:3-9)

or

"Wait, am I the Jew or the Samaritan in that story?" (Luke 10:25-37)

In the book of Matthew, however, very early in His ministry, Jesus discusses how to pray. You will find no fables here, no hidden meanings. There are no stories meant to soar over the heads of the common and zing the Pharisees spectating in the back of the room. It's simply an example of how we are to pray to the Father. I, for one, am thankful for a simple example even I can follow in my prayer time.

In Matthew 6:9 Jesus says, **"This then is how we should pray, 'Our Father who is in Heaven hallowed be Thy name...'"**

Jesus starts with "hallowed be Thy name." Hallowed isn't a word we use much anymore. In fact, I can't think of a single time in my life that I have used that word unless I was saying the Lord's prayer. But it has great meaning when being ascribed to the Lord. It means holy, set apart, different than everything else. We are reaching out to a God that's at the very fringe of what our finite minds are capable of understanding. "Father, you are so incredible that you are set apart from EVERYTHING we can understand! Greater than all our concepts and dreams. We are in Awe of You!"

When you start your prayer that way, rest in it for just a second. Don't jump to forgiveness and asking for your daily bread. We will get there. Spend another moment just worshipping our AMAZING God! If it helps, try proclaiming some of the wonders of God! "Only you, God, would send your son to die in my place. Only you, God, could hang the stars on nothing (Job 9:9). Only you, God, can hear the prayers of every man and respond perfectly."

We begin with worship because it sets the tone for the rest of our prayer. Now as we advance toward, "...forgive our debts..." and "...give us our daily bread..." we can keep our focus on God! It's easy for forgiveness to be US focused. We make excuses for our sin when we are US focused. We confess and desire to make right when we are God focused. It's also easy to be selfish when we pray for things, but a God focus makes us want what HE wants. It all starts with *worship*!

I am excited to start our 21 days together! May your 21 minutes (or more) a day start with worship and proclaiming, "Hallowed be the name of God!" And may that set the tone as we seek God together!



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Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Psalm 150

I grew up in a little country denominational church in Colorado where I first learned what praise and worship “looked like.” Many of you might have a similar memory, but I distinctly remember the choir director calling out, “Turn to hymn number 457,” and we would all stand, pull the hymnal out, and sing together...all four stanzas. Often I would know the first stanza, “I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love,” but almost never the next three. I remember the words often being so rich; certainly people of deep faith and hearts of praise wrote them. But as I looked around it often felt we were droning on in rote the words before us. Did they—did I—take the opportunity with these carefully crafted words to praise? To worship?

Later, I remember at youth group and camp that they were “cooler” because the words were up on the overhead projector, and pastor Eric was singing simple choruses with his guitar that were easy to remember. Most sang along. I have flashes of memories of being at Deer Valley Ranch and singing worship songs around the campfire looking at what appeared to be infinite stars.

Finally, college was where I was most transformed and challenged in what praise and worship *could* look like. As I joined a group of teens and twenty-somethings, I saw a body of believers who had decided that it didn’t matter the words, the instruments, who was watching, or whatever was going on in life; the uninhibited pursuit of Christ was all that mattered in praise and worship. If that meant kneeling, dancing,

weeping, singing, raising hands, sitting, or playing an instrument, we ran to Jesus unbridled. I had this transformational body of believers as part of my life for over five years, and, during that time, I saw the Father impact so many. I became a worshiper during this time—someone who loved to praise and worship Jesus.

That has been 30-plus years ago now, and, as I enter praise and worship, I think back and wonder: what is the praise the Father would encourage—would want—from us? In Psalm 150 it sounds like a party. I like a party! It sounds a little untamed, uninhibited, and fun. I like fun! The hymns of the generations before, the choruses of my college days, and the writers of today's worship can each speak life. It really is the worshiper deciding in his or her heart to "praise Him." No matter the song or what is around, the focus of our attention is on Him alone. Let's be a people that do not "drone on in rote the words before us," but instead, praise Him with all we have and all we are.

Father, as we enter praise and worship, transform us into a people focused on You alone. I pray we would not worry about anything around us, how great the song might be, or the music in the background, but that we would have a singular audience and worship You in truth. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, draw us into a deeper relationship with You, and show us how to worship–You! Amen.



My soul, bless the Lord, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. My soul, bless the Lord, and do not forget all His benefits. He forgives all your iniquity, and He heals all your diseases. He redeems your life from the pit; He crowns you with faithful love and compassion. He satisfies you with good things; your youth is renewed like the eagle.

Psalm 103:1-5

What a beautiful example of authentic worship. This whole chapter contains proclamation after proclamation of the great works of our mighty God. But don't miss the ONE command! It says "do not forget" all His benefits. How easy it is to forget!

The interesting thing about that phrase is how early it is stated in the entire chapter! It's verse 2 out of 22 verses! The psalmist doesn't even really begin to praise God for all He has done and who He is, before saying "Remember, oh my soul....THIS is why we worship!" (paraphrased by myself).

When I read these words, I am so convicted! I am definitely one who sometimes just begins the "act" of worship (whether that be through prayer, praise, or study) before taking the time to remember who God has been in history, and who He has been to me. When I DO take the time, my heart posture becomes one of gratitude, awe, and wonder. How much more can I actually worship the King of my heart, when I am standing in awe of Him? Not just because of His works, but because of WHO YHWH is! So amazing!

I heard a worship song one time that completely moved my heart, (the song is called *Miracle is YOU*). The song is almost 9 minutes of singing about the greatness of God, but my favorite part is where the singing stops and someone begins to pray. These are the words that he says "We don't glorify Your things, we don't glorify what You've done, but we glorify who You are. You've done so much for us, but that's not

bigger than WHO You've been to us. THAT's why we lift our hands and bless Your Holy name, God!"

Those words stopped me in my tracks and reminded me that I need to keep aligning my heart with the Lord, so that I can understand who He is. When I do that, I worship with abandon, because it's not just another act of me singing a song...It's me standing in awe of WHO it is that I get to worship! How amazing is that?!

God, You are the maker of the heavens and the earth! Help us to stay constantly amazed at who YOU are! Amen.



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You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

Psalm 63:1-4

Have you ever known a craving so intense it impacted your entire being? A yearning for something missing, or more of what you have already experienced? A couple of years ago, I was hiking a notoriously difficult peak with a friend in the backcountry of Yellowstone. We ended up drinking most of our water during the ascent, and ran out with about 3 miles of fully exposed, water-free trail left. As we walked, the dry mouth began to set in, and our packs felt exponentially heavier than they did at the beginning of our excursion. We tried to distract ourselves with singing, trivia, and our favorite hiking game: "Is that a stump, rock, or bear?" We ate a couple of oranges, thinking that would at least moisten our tongues and engage our senses in something other than the ache for water, but it only (momentarily) dulled our awareness of the desire. Even when we were distracted, our bodies yearned for the one thing that could truly satisfy us. The sun-heated water in our car at the end was an overwhelming relief.

As we spend this time approaching Easter in seeking the Lord, I wonder if we fully **yearn** for Him? If there is one thing our world is overwhelmingly proficient in, it's the art of distraction. Do we take the time to pause, to tune out everything surrounding us, and tune into the One who gave His life for us? No matter what it is (social media, time with friends, entertainment, food, etc), if we are using it to distract us from that longing for Him, we miss out on the fullness of communion with God. Furthermore, if we are persistent, those things we use to distract us can numb our awareness of our true desire for Him.

Perhaps you have experienced God in a deep, undeniable way in your life. Maybe there is a story you tell where you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the power of God impacted your life. Maybe you are in a season now when you wonder if you will feel that again?

Brothers and Sisters, I encourage you to take time today to reflect on what fulfills you. Is there something in your life that dulls your desire for Him? What is the Lord’s desire for you right now?

Abba Father, we humbly seek your presence. We ask that you search our hearts and nurture our craving for you. We pray for you to renew and refresh our senses, to be wholly devoted and attuned to your will. Give us faith to trust the path you have for us, and give us strength for the journey. We honor and worship you, for your very nature is I Am. In your name we pray. Amen.



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Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

John 4:23-24

I truly believe we are living in times where people need Jesus more than ever. Media outlets, social media, etc, want to guide the narrative in *how* people think or even *what* to think. We see it all around us. Their answer? Minimize God; Maximize self. It's the complete opposite of what God desires for us, of course. Culture tells us to place our faith in ourselves and our accomplishments rather than giving glory to God for our successes. Self-love and self-absorption is at an all time high. The world offers many distractions to keep us busy, satisfied, and content. Is this really what God desires of us? Is this really what God requires of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose?

The Asbury University revival began on February 8, 2023 and ended February 23, 2023. For 15 days, a complete student-led revival brought to the campus thousands of hungry souls who wanted to encounter Jesus to the campus. It wasn't just the students on campus, but people traveled hundreds of miles to be a part of the movement of God. I imagine this is how the woman who was bleeding for 12 years may have felt. She decided to push her way through the crowd because she knew Jesus could heal her. She said, "If I can just touch his robe, I'll be made well" (Matthew 9:21). Jesus felt her faith so strongly; he knew someone touched Him, and then He blessed her and said her faith saved her. This is true worship. True worship cannot exist outside of faith. Worship and faith go hand-in-hand. It's not just about singing great worship songs on Sunday mornings before service or on the ride home from work. True worship, in Spirit and in truth, is not about conforming to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can discern what is, "the good, pleasing and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

Jesus tells us that the Father seeks those who are worshiping in Spirit and in truth. What does that mean? It means God is Spirit and true worship is a matter of the Spirit, not a physical location. It's who you are and the way you live that matters to God. Let us not be like the Pharisees who were hypocritical and righteous in their own eyes. Take time to reflect on what you may give more time to that hinders your true worship. God's desire is for us to know Him personally, seek Him first in all we do, and worship Him with a true heart of worship.

Lord, Thank you Lord for loving me through all my flaws. Thank you that I can be myself with you and that you understand all of me. Help me to seek you first in all areas of my life, and remove anything from me that hinders my ability to come boldly to the throne of God in true worship. I long to be one of the true worshipers that you are seeking. In Jesus Name, Amen.



Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2

D.L. Moody is credited with saying, "The problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar." This can be a sad and all-too-frequent truth in the Christian life. As believers in God and followers of Jesus, we know that we are to surrender our all, that it is the "true and proper worship" God is seeking, yet our natural minds don't comply. Why is that?

Well, placing ourselves on the altar takes submission, and submission requires trust. We will not submit to someone we do not trust, except perhaps through force, and God desires our devotion, not our coercion. So how do we build trust with God so we can submit to the altar and worship God as living sacrifices?

That is where verse 2 comes in. The pattern of the world tells us that trusting God is crazy! "Why would you sacrifice your desires for a God you can't even see?" Or we might hear a deception that is, perhaps, a little closer to home, "Wouldn't God want me to be happy?" However, scripture is clear that we are to put off worldly thinking and be *transformed* by the *renewing* of our minds. This means that we must catch our every thought that aligns with the world's thinking and let God breathe His life over it to make it the mind of Christ. When our thoughts say, "You can't submit to God because you can't trust Him," the mind of Christ says, "God has been faithful in your life, and you can trust Him with this as well."

Once our minds are renewed to the mind of Christ, we are able to walk in the will of God where He proves His faithfulness yet again. We respond to His faithfulness by crawling back on the altar in worship. It becomes a cyclical rhythm that draws us closer to God and brings Him glory.

Jesus, you know first hand how painful it is to be a living sacrifice. You became a living sacrifice for me to complete God’s will and make a way for me to know Him. Help me to crawl back on the altar every day, to submit my heart to You, and let You renew my mind. I can trust You because You gave everything for me. I know giving my all is true worship. I want to worship You with my life. Please show me what that looks like today, in this moment. Amen.



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Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Hebrews 13:15-16

Chapter 13 of Hebrews focuses on living a Christian life—a life of holiness and perseverance. In the early church we see a fundamental shift in the understanding of sacrifice. We are not called to the bloody sacrifices of the old covenant but to a new covenant. Because the Church does have an altar (the cross) and the Church does have a High Priest (Jesus), believers should always offer sacrifices. This new covenant calls for a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips.⁽¹⁾

Verses 15-16 give us daily application as to how we should provide praise: continually, openly, and sacrificially. Our praise should not only occur when it comes easily or when our surroundings are pleasant. Our praise should never cease even when it is challenging. Sacrifice requires surrender. It is often inconvenient and requires a cost. In the words of Charles Spurgeon, “So, then, we are to utter the praises of God, and it is not sufficient to feel adoring emotions.”⁽²⁾ We should aspire to be as the creatures in the throne room – praising day and night without ceasing:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, is to come” (Revelation 4:8).

It is also not enough to simply praise God; we are called to share our joy with others. Truly, in the same way we are eager to share the love we have with our newfound bride or groom, we should be eager to share with others the love we have for our King. In this He is pleased. We should remember that Hebrews is written to a persecuted church, a church that needs to be reminded of the supremacy of Christ, and

perseverance through him. A church can only thrive in persecution through praise.

Lord, we praise you and offer our words and our lives as a living sacrifice unto you. For you alone are worthy of our adoration, our affection, and our love. We beseech you to give us the discipline to praise at all times and in all circumstances. We pray that we do not forget to sing your praises openly and to have the courage to speak to others. We long for nothing more than you to be pleased by our praises – that it may be a sweet and pleasing aroma to your throne.



1. Enduring Word Commentary, David Guzik (2018).
2. Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Volume 34, Charles H. Spurgeon (1888).

You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

Nehemiah 9:6

In 2015, a fourteen-year project to recreate the seven Unicorn Tapestries by hand was completed and put on display in Stirling Castle in Scotland. When you first step into the exhibition room, it's incredible to see how the huge weavings transform a cold, stone room into a vibrant, engaging, floor-to-ceiling art gallery, with each tapestry telling you part of a connected visual narrative. Another step closer shows just how detailed and intricate they are; there's so much to see in each vignette. Then you watch the educational video on the recreation process, and you begin to really understand the intense design, thought, and workmanship that went into each element of the project. It's impressive to realize that someone MADE every piece of this art. From the shearing and cleaning of wool, spinning and dyeing the threads, setting up the loom and plotting the design, down to each and every single little stitch intentionally put in place by hand. Someone had to prepare and make every part of it so we can now enjoy the collective whole. And those are just tapestries...

In Nehemiah 9:6, we're drawn into a vast acknowledgment of the staggering workmanship of our Lord. You, Yahweh, MADE everything! The universe with all the glowing galaxies and stars, the heavenly bodies humming a subsonic symphony tuned by their creator. The earth with its geological wonders, veins of crystals, minerals, and elements both hidden in the deeps and scattered on the surface. The innumerable varieties of creatures and flora thriving all around us in a medley of forms and colors, including some colors that can't be seen by the human eye, but are unveiled in a painted riot when viewed under ultraviolet or infrared light! The oceans with their unexplored mysteries and undiscovered species: an entire other-world of

fascination to be delighted in. Not to mention the astounding design found even in the smallest of organisms, the irreducible complexity that cannot be denied in some of our basest forms of life. God's handiwork is *everywhere*. Whether you look far out into space, around ourselves at the things we can see and touch, or down to a microscopic level, the awe-inspiring work of God is undeniable. The whole of creation praises the Lord! (Psalm 148) May I raise my heart to join in the chorus!

Holy Father, You alone are the only One worthy of our worship. Thank you for sharing your infinite creativity and imagination with us through the work of your hands! Help me to continue to see your fingerprints all around me, the revelation of your heart in the design and purpose you put into the whole world, and to remain in humble awe of the beauty that you have placed everywhere as a gift direct from your heart to ours. I give you all the glory and I praise you, Lord, for you are truly amazing!



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The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

Psalm 111:10

I hope that wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you continue to find new reasons to worship God. One of the neatest things about Him is how much He wants us to participate in what He is doing in our lives! When we ask Jesus to become our Savior and Lord, we don't instantly become a perfect person. It takes time, failure, and a lot of growing pains to look like Jesus. But guess what? The Holy Spirit partners with us *personally* for the work that God wants to do in our hearts (take a look at 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 for more on this!). We truly couldn't do it without Him. Although there are many incredible gifts that God uses to change us to look more like His Son, today's passage is all about how God gives us His wisdom. Read it again!

So how do we become wise? The psalmist says to fear the Lord! This phrase can be confusing to our modern ears, because we are told in other places in Scripture that God is an incredible loving Father (Isaiah 64:7, 1 John 3:1), and the word "fear" can seem incongruent. The intent of the author here is not that we are afraid, but that we are to respect, honor and humble ourselves before God with great reverence. Reflect on this thought. How can respect for God give us wisdom? It is because we are open to His direction and willing to obey! Who better to take direction from than the Creator and Sustainer of the universe? To Him belongs eternal praise!

Is there something in your life that you need divine wisdom to solve? Or maybe you can think of a time where God provided out-of-this-world wisdom in a difficult situation. Take a minute to reflect on this and write your thoughts down below.

God, we celebrate that You are a good Father, that You give good gifts and You desire to partner with us as we grow! Help me to humble myself, to ask for Your direction, and to obey with joy. Amen.



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**O Lord, I will honor and praise your name, for you are my God!
You do such wonderful things! You planned them long ago, and
now you have accomplished them.**

Isaiah 25:1

When was the last time you planned something? Perhaps a special project or a big event? How did it go? Was every detail perfect? How far ahead did you plan? Did you plan it years ahead? Months? Or just days ahead?

Every individual plans something. Communities plan for future infrastructure; teachers make lesson plans; attorneys make plans for a court case; adults plan vacations; students make plans for their future; even little ones make plans for something they want to do. The list for ways plans are made can go on and on. However, in perfect faithfulness, God alone has planned things long ago that have happened or will happen in a distant future. Can we do that? No, we can think of our many plans or failed plans. These were short term, in our lifetime, not centuries from now. Does it boggle your mind to think that God planned things centuries before they happened and some are still to happen? It does mine!

Here are just a few examples:

- In Genesis God told Abraham He was going to make of Him a great nation.
- God gave Joseph a dream to reveal His plan for Joseph that would take place decades later.
- In perfect faithfulness God planned the birth and even the death of His Son. Long before Jesus was born He gave words to Isaiah that a Son would be born to a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14) His name would be Emmanuel (God with us).
- In John 16 Jesus told about His death and resurrection to prepare His disciples for what was planned.

If we continued the list would go on and on. Yes, these are amazing things—things God planned long before they were evident.

What an amazing God, who knows and has planned even our lives from beginning to end! The definition of exalted is, “placed at a high or powerful level; held in high regard.” He IS to be exalted in every aspect of our lives. In our prayers, in our work, in our interaction with others, and yes, in our trials. His faithfulness in our lives is perfect! We depend on HIM to bring us to perfection.

Challenge: Try doing a Bible research to read God’s many plans that have come to pass, often decades or centuries ahead. See also His future plans that are still to take place. Try using the words “promise,” or “promised,” or “foretold.”

Father, I exalt You and praise Your name. It is amazing to see all that You have planned and all of your plans that have been fulfilled. Your faithfulness is astounding. I know You also have plans for my life. Please help me to walk closely with You—not ahead of You—but submit to Your leading so that You can complete the work You planned long ago for me. I praise You! Truly Your Name is above every Name!



I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Has following Jesus made all your problems go away? I doubt it. Do you *wish* Jesus would make them all go away? I confess I often do. Can you think of something that is weighing on your mind? Maybe it's big and obvious or maybe you could make a list. You might call it a challenge, an obstacle, a problem, a mountain, trouble, or (if you're prone to vivid language) a FLAMING ARROW from the pit of hell targeted to take you out! Been there.

The reality is, Jesus never promised his followers a problem free life. In fact he clearly reminds his disciples "in this world you will have trouble." Faith and following Jesus may help us to avoid some foolish pitfalls and painful consequences of our life before Christ, but Jesus reminds us we that will still have trouble, and we will still have problems. It reads like a promise. It's not really an encouraging promise (and one you won't likely find on a coffee mug).

So what does Jesus offer us? Something better: a peace-filled life. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace." In Christ it is possible to live a peace-filled life in the midst of trouble, challenges, and setbacks—many of which are outside of our control.

How?! We worship a king who has overcome the world! His death and resurrection have conquered sin and death. We truly can take heart and not be discouraged or afraid. Worshiping our King shifts our focus from the problem to the King. When our problems seem big, often our God seems small. And when we have a small view of God, we are lacking a true view of who God really is. Scripture and worship help restore a right view of our King.

When we worship God for who He truly is, many problems or challenges may still remain, but we are reminded that He is in control. He is with us and not distant from us. He is for us and not against us. His love, presence, and power remain. It's true that *"the peace of God which surpasses understanding"* is available (Philippians 4:7). But we often miss that *that* kind of peace is found in seeking God first. It's through worship and prayer that we get to a place where the available peace can actually fill our hearts and minds.

What seems bigger to you in this life season, your problems or your God?

Lord, I confess that I often want You to just remove obstacles and problems in my life—that I'm sometimes confused by why You allow certain challenges to remain. Help me overcome my desire to have things easy. While I clearly see my troubles, help me to place focus on you. Give me wisdom and courage where I may need to make a change to follow you better. And help me to seek You first with an open heart of worship that allows you to pour in your peace. Amen.



Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise Him again - my Savior and my God!

Psalm 42:11

If I were forced to pick just one book of the Bible that was my favorite, I would have to pick the Psalms. We see the totality of human emotions poured out in the 150 chapters of this book. To know that the saints of old, all of God's people throughout the ages, even Jesus himself, have made the Psalms their own, is a soothing balm to the soul.

Psalm 42 speaks sweet words to those carrying the weight of a downcast soul (which is a reality many believers face today). Its author offers us practical tools to guide us as we sojourn on to our eternal home.

"Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad?" The psalmist takes the time to examine his heart. He is honest about its condition. God created us with emotions. They are good! But as with anything in a fallen world, good things can turn into "god" things. Our emotions are horrible "gods". They were not designed to lead us. Instead, they are meant to be servants that lead us to our Savior. So what are we to do when our emotions want to lead us astray?

"I will put my hope in God! I will praise Him again - my Savior and my God!" Here the author gives us guidance in how he handles his wayward emotions. He begins preaching to himself. He is not content to lie down and console himself. He does something about it! He takes his heart in his hands and walks it back to his God. Instead of letting his soul dictate to him, he begins dictating to his soul. And praise is the result! What a beautiful way to worship!

Even in depression or a dark season of life, we can be worshipful. Our downcast souls can lead us to a pit or a platform. Spurgeon once said,

“I’ve learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.”

May the waves of our emotions throw us into Your glory and goodness, Lord. When a heavy heart threatens to draw us away from You, may we preach to ourselves Your faithfulness, placing our hope in Your unending love. Amen!



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Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to Him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3: 20-21

Glory to God...He is ABLE! Can you imagine the mindset Paul had when he was writing this while on house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier, awaiting trial for his "crimes" of spreading the gospel? How is it possible to give glory to God in such a circumstances? How is it possible to recognize God's divine ability when you're literally sitting in prison awaiting what could very well be a death sentence? God is able in the good—and in the challenging.

Have you ever been there? Have you felt hopeless, like there was no way out? What is your mindset in those moments? What should it be?

God is ABLE! Bring Him glory. Read this scripture again. God is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish some things. NO!! More!!! Infinitely more! Immeasurably more! Exceedingly abundantly more! More than we can ask, think, or even imagine!

What can you think of? What can you imagine? What's the craziest thing you've ever asked for? What's the most outlandish dream you've ever had? What do you wish for? What's out of reach? What is something that seems so far out of reach that it could never happen? What comes to mind? God, our Father, can accomplish MORE!

Maybe you're praying for a new job. Maybe you're praying for healing, whether physical or emotional, or for reconciliation. Maybe you've had a loss: a friend, a loved one, a spouse, a child. Maybe you deal with anxiety. Maybe you deal with addiction. Maybe you just can't see how you can go on. Listen to this promise again. God is ABLE! Now what should our response be?

Glory to God! All of us! With every breath. All of this—everything—is from Him. Everything is FOR Him. He deserves the glory!

Give Him glory when you wake up in the morning. Give Him glory when you get a big promotion. Give Him glory when your kid makes you proud. Give Him glory when you have enough money to pay the bills. Give Him glory when your family is healthy and thriving. Give Him glory when everything seems to go right.

But that's not all. God deserves the glory not just because of what He has done, but for the simple fact that *He is able*.

Give Him glory when you lose your job. Give Him glory when you find out you're sick. Give Him glory when your family is torn apart. Give Him glory when you can't pay your rent. Remember, you can't even ask or imagine the things our God is able to do. When all hope is lost, to God be the glory because HE is able.

So, join me, church! Say it out loud! Glory to God...from all of us...
FOREVER...through all generations. Praise God.



With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.

James 3:9-10

I remember when, several years ago, the Lord captured the words that were coming out of my mouth and showed me how displeasing they were to Him and how I grieved the Holy Spirit by uttering them. Proverbs 18:21 tells us, "Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

I then asked the Holy Spirit to set a guard over my tongue, that I would only speak life and not death. Now, have I perfected this quest? Not yet! But I am determined to set my mind and mouth to accomplish the goal to tame my tongue to speak life and not death. Not only that, but I also want to worship the Lord by taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, so that my very words are an act of worship that is pleasing in His sight. 2 Corinthians 10:5 reminds us, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

We have the choice to worship the Lord with our words that bring life and not death. We can bring a smile to His face as those pleasant words come out of our mouth. When we take every thought captive, we will recover what the enemy has stolen from us, defeat his tactics and gain the victory of a pure mind and heart.

Oh Lord my God, teach me Your ways, that a fragrant aroma would reach Your throne by the words of my mouth. Help me learn to worship You in spirit and in truth. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord. Amen.



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Do not worship any other god, for the Lord whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Exodus 34:14

How do you spend your time? What things do you spend your time doing? As a culture, we are so focused on OUR time. We focus on our productivity, our fast-paced busyness, doing what we want, or even doing what our family needs. Let's get right to it—what do you worship in your life?

Ouch! In Exodus 34, God covenants with Israel saying He will do awesome things for them! He will drive all others out of the Promised Land and bless the world through them. All they have to do is not treaty with the Canaanites, break down the altars to other gods, and cut down their Asherah poles. How could they not do those things to live in the promise of God?

Don't we do the same? We have the promise from God of eternal life with Him! Yet we still place (or worship) other "gods" before the Lord Almighty. It's not just that we should not do this. It says in today's passage that it actually makes God jealous. How awesome and humbling is that! The God of the universe loves YOU so much and wants a relationship with YOU so much that He is jealous when YOU put other gods before Him. We were created to worship Him alone!

Your finances, job, possessions, hobbies, kids, and spouse—these are all necessary and good things. They are all gifts from God that He wants us to enjoy, manage, and be blessed by; but do we place them before Him? Are they priorities in OUR kingdom and not God's kingdom? It can be easy to put God on the back-burner in our busy lives in order to "do what we have to do."

But what should you do instead? You should focus on committing all things in your life to God. Ask for Him to lead you in all areas of your

life. Glorify Him and His kingdom in all that you do. This is your constant worship!

Lord, help me to trust You and glorify You in all areas of my life. I worship You today through the way I keep You first in my life. Guide me into the fullness and promise of Your love. Amen.



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Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

1 Chronicles 16:8-11

You know that lady with the long red hair that worships with abandon? Well, that's me! There is something so precious and intimate I share with the Lord as I sing His praises and worship Him with my whole heart. It is not something I can fully explain, but I will try.

Have you ever had a core moment in your life where you were so filled with Joy? A moment that was so divinely appointed that only Sweet Jesus could have orchestrated it? Pause a minute and think about it. Maybe it is the birth of a child after years of infertility; celebrating a year of sobriety after decades of active addiction; being told you are cancer free after a grueling battle; seeing your child thrive after so much hurt; finding a place to live in your price range; getting a text from a friend in a moment of complete despair; or hearing just the right song at the right time.

Was there a moment, no matter how fleeting, that you felt the hand of Jesus holding your heart and carrying each and everyone of your troubles for you? THAT is how I feel when I worship. I give praise to Him in my weakness. I sing praises to Him to bring glory to Him, and the beautiful thing is that it fills my Spirit to overflowing. This is how I worship. This is how I praise Him. This is how I connect so fully and feel His presence. I often feel like the Little Drummer Boy: this is all I have to give to Him as a gift.

As I get older, I can see where God has been present in all things. I see all the places He carried me when I was too weak to stand; I see the places He held my hand and guided me to safety, and the places

where He wept. And in each and every one of these moments HE LOVES ME, HE LOVES YOU, AND WOULD ALWAYS CHOOSE THE CROSS. For that, and for His unfailing faithfulness, we should always choose to worship.

Sweet, precious Jesus, I long to sing praises to You with my whole heart. Whether I sit, stand, kneel, lay prostrate, or worship with abandon, may Your heart rejoice and receive this small gift I can give. I look to You for strength in my moments of weakness and I yearn to seek Your face always. In Your glorious name I pray, Amen.



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All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.

Psalm 86:9

As we study the Bible and learn more about God's heart, we can clearly see that He has a heart for the nations. Jesus didn't die for a certain group of people or a specific nation. He gave His life for all people and all nations, saving all who would place their trust and faith in Him.

Over the past decade, my family and I have had the privilege of traveling to other nations on several mission trips. As a missions pastor, I also had the great blessing of leading mission trips and taking teams of believers to other nations to serve and experience the global Church. One of the most beautiful things we have seen is how the gospel ties and unifies us ALL together. The Church is not bound by man-made county, state, or country lines. Borders cannot stop the power of the gospel from spreading. When you sit in worship together with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ from other nations, singing and worshipping our King in different languages, you get to experience firsthand what heaven will be like.

The Bible says in Revelation 7:9 that in eternity there will be people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. We were created to worship God, and someday when we are all in glory—in His presence perfectly and eternally—people from every nation will gather together to worship Him. Psalm 86:9 says, "All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name." What a sight that will be. Until that day, we long to be with Him and worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Lord God, You alone are worthy of our praise and worship. We long to be in your presence. We pray that our hearts will be unified in Christ on earth as it will be in Heaven. We pray that we will live our lives in worship to You and in practice for eternity. Come soon, Lord Jesus, we pray!



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Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

2 Samuel 6:14-15

DAVID!! Is this the same David who, while just a shepherd boy, defeated the Philistine giant with just a slingshot and then became one of Israel's most important kings? And now he's unexpectedly dancing before the Lord with all his might. David, with all his flaws, was anointed as the Lord's chosen one, and, from that day on, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him.

We all worship differently: some in quiet reverence, some merely repeating the words of a worship song because it's expected, and some singing out loudly, arms raised, swaying with the beat. But if you are like David, and the Spirit runs through you so deep, your worship will become so divine that you are dancing. Psalm 149:3 says, "Let them praise his name with dancing." Never be afraid to worship God so deeply and completely that your feet, your arms—your whole body are caught up in a celebration of His goodness. You may start out swaying, and then suddenly you are dancing!

Dance is universal and a beautiful way to worship God—to express joy and gratitude for the One who created us and gave us such an undeserved gift in His son, Jesus Christ.

I have a little frame on my kitchen counter that reads, "Life may not be the party we had hoped for—but while we are here we should dance." Following Jesus doesn't assure us of a perfect life, but it gives us a life of forgiveness, grace, hope and love.

While David danced to celebrate something as magnificent as bringing up the ark of the Lord, we can simply turn on a great Toby Mac song like "The Goodness," or a Crowder song like "Good

God Almighty,” and DANCE! Worship your heavenly Father with every ounce of your being!

Precious Father, You so beautifully created me and wove me together. Today, as I worship you, I ask that you let me be free to praise Your name and worship You in movement. Ecclesiastes 3:4 says “a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and time to dance.” You are worthy of my praise and I will celebrate You with dance!



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Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire.'

Romans 12:28-29

Fire. It can be a deadly element, burning down forests with minimal effort, or it can be a source of warmth, used in fireplaces or to cook food on a hot stove. How it is used greatly affects how effective it can be. I believe that, just as with fire, it is imperative to understand the lens through which we view worship.

Who are we worshiping? Another god, or perhaps a genie that grants our wishes? No, because it is written, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only" (Deut. 6:13). The God we serve created everything—from the depths of the sea to the highest stars in the sky! We worship the One who was, and is, and is to come, the great I AM. To try and truly answer the question of "who" is impossible, for He is infinite.

So, as Paul says, we must be thankful, worshiping the Lord with reverence and awe. And as we begin to shift our minds towards a true understanding of who He is, I believe that, like the fire, true worship will bring a change within us, giving us the strength we need to carry out His word.

God, You are far greater than I could ever fathom. Not even Moses was permitted to gaze upon Your face, yet his face glowed from being in Your presence. Forgive me, Jesus, for the sins I've done. I pray that my worship would extend past the pews, and that in every moment Your presence would engulf me: that I would be consumed by the Holy Spirit like a fire. Thank you, Lord, for choosing to see me. In all I do, You are my God. Amen.



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Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:15-16

Lately, I have had the words from a song in my head playing on repeat. “Let the light in! Let the light on in!” This verse is saying, “Let His light out! Let His light shine out!” But you can’t have one without the other. I need to be so full of the light of Jesus that it has to seep out in my words and my actions.

This sounds terrific but goes against our natural way of thinking. Culture teaches us to care about what others think—that we need to do what we do so others will like us, care about us, or treat us well. This way of thinking lives in our subconscious often and directs how we live, how we interact, and what we involve ourselves in. We often live life caring more about what the world thinks of us than what our Lord thinks of us.

This season I, personally, have asked the Lord to change this prideful thinking in me. I have committed myself fully to Him—to sit at His feet. He has answered by telling me to walk in humility, learn from His Words, engage with Him in much conversation, and to show Him to the world through my words and actions.

Will you join me?

Lord, we so want to reflect you as we engage with others but it can be so hard. We are sinners and we’ve taken on so much of what the world tells us we should be. We ask, Jesus, to make time with You our number one priority. Take away our pride and show us what living in humility looks like to You. Help us to live with new thinking, new passion, and new energy for living our life in a way that reflects

You and shows the world who You are and why they should get to know You. May only Your light shine through us, and may it shine so so brightly! We pray in Your holy name, Amen.



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Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16-17

Colossians 3:12-17 has been a favorite passage of mine for as long as I can remember. It is the culmination of this section of chapter 3, which begins, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (v.1). Our hearts are immediately pointed to the risen Christ, seated in His rightful place. And since we, too, have been raised with Christ, these final verses are the worshipful outflow of lives lived as resurrection people.

If you actually read through chapter 3, we see that Paul reminds us who we ARE (raised with Christ), then who we are NOT (v. 5-11), then shows us what it looks like to LIVE OUT who we are (v.12-17). And it’s not living it out *just* in our relationship with God; this life we live as resurrection people is one we live in community.

We live in a society that is highly individualized. Living in community doesn’t always come naturally to us; relationships can be messy. Culture tells us that unless someone agrees with us, they can’t truly love us; it can be easy to be divided, even within the church. But this is nothing new. God knows that there will always be things that society says should divide us (v.11) and that living as resurrection people would set His people—His community—apart.

How, then, are we to live? We are to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love. We forgive, even when it’s hard. Peace and thankfulness are ever-present as we worship

together despite our differences. We are to be a community that lives as representatives of Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, for the glory of God. When we do this, we live lives of worship that point people, desperate for something more, toward God.

My encouragement to you today is to use this passage as a prayer. Pray it over your family. Pray it over Revive. Use it as a template to live a life of worship, within community, as a testimony to a watching world.

God, as Your chosen people, holy and dearly loved, help us to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Let us bear with each other and forgive one another if we have a grievance against someone. Help us forgive as You have forgiven us. And above all, help us to put on love, which binds us all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, since as members of one body we were called to peace. And let us always be thankful! May the message of Christ dwell among us richly as we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to You, God, with gratitude in our hearts. And whatever we do, whether in word or deed, let us do it all in your name, Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through You.



But when you pray, go away by
yourself, shut the door behind you,
and pray to your Father in private.
Then your Father, who sees
everything, will reward you.

- Jesus

(Matthew 6:6)



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