

# 21

DAYS OF PRAYER



2022

When I ponder how I use the word “love,” many things come to mind. I love God, I love my husband, I love my family, I love my dog, and I love my friends. But, I also “love” Romio’s Greek supreme pizza, Casting Crowns, the Los Angeles Dodgers, classic Mustangs, Indiana Jones, playing golf, 70 degree weather, the sound of the military jets, and the fall colors. I, like most people, throw the word “love” around so casually it gets watered down and loses its true meaning. When we are a fan of something, we tend to use the word “love” to describe our enjoyment in that thing or person.

I also love...or should I say enjoy...the Greek language and its use of many words, tenses, and order to convey the true meaning. The Greeks have primarily three words for love: The first is *Eros*, a romantic love; the second is *Philia*, a brotherly love; the third is *Agape*, a self-sacrificing love. *Eros* and *Philia*, by their nature, are motivated by self-interest, self-gratification, and self-protection. Both have an element of giving attached to them, but most often the giving comes with an expectation of getting something in return. To *agape*-love someone is a choice. It is to choose to see the other person in a favorable light; to choose to delight in them and to choose to act on their behalf. *Agape* love is not based on feelings but rather action. *Agape* love requires us to love God, our spouses and families, and our enemies...yes, our enemies...without the expectation of getting anything in return.

In today’s verse, Jesus *commands* us to

“Love the Lord your God with **all** your heart.”

Mark 12:30a

To *agape*-love God is to see Him as Sovereign, faithful, and loving; to delight and to trust in Him; and to choose to consistently act in obedience to Him without regard to our



Most of us know the beautiful hymn "It Is Well With My Soul," originally written by Horatio Spafford. His story is one of great pain after losses of his closest loved ones. He stared into the depths of the ocean where his two daughters died during an earlier voyage with a collision of the *Ville du Have* and the *Loch Earn* ships. As he stared into those depths, he was inspired to return to his cabin and pen the words...

"When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul."

(His full story and the complete lyrics can be read at [kellygoshorn.com](http://kellygoshorn.com))

What influenced him to confess, in the middle of this horrific moment, that all was well with his soul? Our soul is the spiritual and eternal part of our being; it is distinct from the physical part of our person. In Mark 12:30, it is distinguished from the heart, mind, and strength, yet it is part of the whole. I tend to think of the soul as the part of my life that is eternal. My heart, my mind, and my strength influence me, but my eternal soul is life itself that has been bought by the precious blood of Jesus.

Psalms 104:1 reads, "Praise the LORD my soul. LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty." We can praise the LORD with our mind, because we understand Him as our creator; we can praise Him with our heart; we can praise Him with our strength by giving our strength to serve Him. Yet it seems as we bring these together, in our entire being, in the depths of our soul, (that deep spiritual and eternal part of our being,) then our praise and our understanding go deeper... praise emerges *from* our very being. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is alive, active, and sharper than a two edged sword that penetrates and divides soul and spirit..... We have heard the phrase or comment "He/She has a free spirit." Horatio Spafford could easily have had a despondent spirit or depressed spirit. Think of the power of the Word of God to separate those influences of the mind and heart to bring us to that place where we can say "It is well with my soul....My deep, inner being is not affected

by the things that penetrate my mind or existence." We can surrender to His Word; accept the price He has paid.... We can have stubborn faith in our God who is Sovereign. Mary is a wonderful example as we read her song in Luke 1:46 ... My *soul* glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Her soul glorified her Lord in the midst of the uncertainty regarding what God was requiring of her. Is it well with your soul? Is it easy to be swayed by thoughts of fear, anxiousness or other that enter our minds? Horatio had discovered the secret... we find it in his fourth stanza. His answer was Jesus.

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
    If Jordan above me shall roll,  
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life,  
    Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

Prayer: Precious Father, I thank you for the blood of Jesus sacrificed to cover my sin. I thank you for your Holy Spirit that teaches me and intercedes for me. I thank you for your Word that works in me to judge and uncover that which is not pleasing to you. Help me to submit all to you so that in everything I too can say, "It is well with my soul." Lord I confess that...



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We have a 6-year-old pet named Tater. We've often declared that he knows what is on our minds. He seems to know when we are thinking of going somewhere, whether it is a time when he gets to go, or when it is "Church Day." He even tries to influence our thinking by helping us bring to mind that it is time to eat, time to walk, or time to play. So what is our mind? Webster says: The element of a person that enables them to be aware of the world and their experiences. To think, feel. It is person's intellect, a person's attention, and thought.

Jesus' answer to one of the learned teachers of the law who asked Him what the most important commandment was can be found in Mark 12:29-30.

Love the Lord your God with **all** your  
[...] mind. Mark 12:30b

Take a moment to read it before continuing. It is amazing that our brain never stops "thinking." Most thoughts are actually happening in the background without us being aware of them ([www.livescience.com](http://www.livescience.com)). I'm sure we have all had those sleepless hours when our brain just won't shut off. But during those hours do we love the Lord our God with all our mind? Romans 8:5-9 tells us that if our mind is dominated by sinful nature, it is hostile to God and leads to death. Wow! That is pretty heavy stuff! Those thoughts lead to actions! Yet, it also reads that letting the Spirit control our mind leads to life and peace. I know others, as well as myself, who are asking God to search our mind and make us aware of thoughts that are not pleasing to Him.

It is amazing how God can make us aware of what we are





// **T**he time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things; I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament." -Brother Lawrence

Sometimes called "the kitchen monk," Brother Lawrence is known for practicing the presence of God in all he did. In the non-spiritual tasks of cooking and washing the dishes in the monastery in which he served, he made the decision to cook and wash dishes as if he were doing so for God Himself. In everything he did, he chose to use it as a way to honor and glorify God. Brother Lawrence said, "You don't do spiritual things. You are either Spirit-filled or you are not." He lived the truth that every single thing we do should lead us towards God and away from ourselves.

In today's verse, Jesus *commands* us to

"Love the Lord your God with **all** your strength." Mark 12:30d

The Greek word used here for strength is *ischuos*, which means force, power, or ability and is sometimes translated in the New Testament as "might." In Deuteronomy 6:5, the Old Testament passage Jesus is quoting, the Hebrew word used is *meod*, which is most often used as the adverb "very." It is generally used to intensify the meaning of other words. When God created man and woman it was *meod* good. Cain was *meod* angry at Abel. And when it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, the floodwaters were *meod* powerful. This passage in Deuteronomy could be translated as "Love



the Lord your God with all your very-ness." This means devoting everything we have to God...every possibility, opportunity, and capacity. We are to use all our energy, accomplishments, influence, time, talents, abilities, and money in ways that honor God and bring Him glory.

As we seek God through prayer today, ask Him to open your eyes to all you have been given. Give thanks for those blessings. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to love God fully and completely with **all** your daily actions using **all** your strengths.

Prayer: Lord, You have called me to love You with **all** my strength. Show me those things onto which I have an unhealthy or unholy attachment, loosen my grip, and help me to release them. Help me, with humility, to recognize my strengths and show me ways they can be used in order to grow your Kingdom. Thank you, God, for all the many blessings I have been given. Nudge me into action. Draw me closer to You every minute of every day, I pray in Jesus' name, amen.



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First Corinthians 15:20-28 uses the word, "all" or "everything" ten times (depending on your translation). Take a minute to read through and highlight every time you see those words.

Right in the middle of these verses, Paul gives us a couple of major theological points.

For as in Adam **all** die, so in Christ **all** will be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:22

Here, Paul is reminding us that sin entered into the world through Adam. Before the fall, there had never been one moment of rebellion or a single prideful thought. But this new mutiny against God's paradise brought a list severe consequences. The worst of course was death. "...in Adam all die."

But there's hope! In Christ, all will be made alive! Christ becomes the salvation for anyone who believes in Him! That includes me, if I put my faith in Jesus. It includes you, if you put your faith in Jesus. And yes, even that one guy who did those gruesome things.

When Jesus is being crucified, there's a shoplifter being crucified right next to him. The Bible doesn't tell us what he got caught stealing, maybe it was significant or maybe it was a small thing, but he ended up knocking on death's door alongside the One Who holds the keys to death and hell (Revelation 1:18). While Jesus didn't deserve to die, this guy did. I wonder if the family he stole from was in the crowd. While everyone else was there to see if Jesus would miraculously escape, they were there to get the justice they deserved. And, if they were there, how would they feel that this thief was being made alive in Christ right before their eyes! Would they be thinking, "He doesn't deserve that?"

I know this story is a stretch and definitely extra biblical, but





What are you looking for? How about this?

W [...] the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Titus 2:13-14

I've heard people say, "I'm just a sinner saved by grace." If that is true, then how can we say that we look for 'that blessed hope of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus?' Shouldn't we be beating ourselves up instead of trying to achieve something we think we could never obtain? What if it's already been done for us? The good news is that it has been done for us **all**! 1 Peter 1:3-5 says "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy He has given us **[all]** a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In Colossians 1:22, it says "yet He has now reconciled you **[all]** in his fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach."

You **all** are no longer a 'sinner saved by grace' but you are all...

- A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9

- For by His sacrifice He died to sin's power once and for all, but He now lives continuously for the Father's pleasure. So let it be the same way with you! Since you are now joined with Him, you must continually view yourselves as dead and unresponsive to sin's appeal while living daily for God's pleasure in union with Jesus, the Anointed One. Romans 6:10-11



“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28 (KJV)

Over the past 9 years, my husband and our family have gone through many times of struggle. However, there has never been a time where I felt God didn't have His hand over it all. We have gone through some very dark times with our children, where we had no control but could only attempt to guide and support them the best we knew how. The most recent trial was when one of our children exhibited some negative mental health symptoms, resorting to superficial self-harm, and ended up needing additional help. During that time, both myself and another of my children experienced negative internal conflicts, including the feelings of the need to do something to release the pain. It almost felt as though our bodies were going to explode if we didn't do something drastic.

The connection with another's feelings has happened more than once in my life, but never as strong as this. Although none of the deep, dark thoughts that we had were even considered, they gave us an insight as to why people use self-harm, how it could be so strong that only God can change that feeling, and healthy alternatives. In all things, no matter how close or far we are from God, He is always in control and allows us to experience things; not to harm us but to give us a perspective to help others.

So today, please ask God, what is He trying to teach you in





"Go into all the world and teach the Gospel to all creation." Mark 16:15

Imagine for a moment that you're in the 3rd grade. It's recess, your favorite time of the school day. You run outside with all of your fellow classmates. The popular kids gather everyone up to play a game. There are two team captains who take turns picking their favorites to stack their teams. As the other children are quickly picked, you realize there are only a few students left. There are an odd number of kids and, go figure, you're not picked for a team. The kids shrug their shoulders and motion for you to sit off to the side by yourself.

Maybe you haven't experienced this exact situation, but we've all experienced a time where we've felt rejected, left out, or unaccepted. We all have a deep desire to be included and accepted. We want to be picked, to be part of the team. God cares about each and every person He has created. In Christ, He has extended life, hope, and salvation to all people, no matter what their background is.

The Bible tells us that God loves all people from all nations. Revelations 7:9 talks about how there will be a people gathered together in heaven from every tribe, nation, people, and language. I think sometimes we can think we are better than others or we matter more. We can be self focused and look inward more often than we look outward, like we're more special than others. Don't get me wrong, you are very special in God's eyes. He loves you deeply and unconditionally. But He feels the same way about the rest of the world. In fact, we can see throughout Scripture that He has a very special place in His heart for the outcast, downtrodden, the least of these. He picks the one who doesn't get picked. He picks you, me, and the orphan who lives in the poorest village in Africa. God's heart is for the nations and He expects ours to be as well. In fact, just before He ascended, Jesus gave His followers The Great Commission to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19). He also said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Notice the progression from local community to the whole world. We



should care about and extend God's love to our neighbors, as well as humans created in God's image who live at the farthest corners of the earth.

Read our daily verse again. Christian, taking the good news of Jesus into the world is not an option for us. It's not something we get to pass off to "those" missionaries to handle. It's our job. It's our mission. We are called to love all of God's creation. We are called to pick those who wouldn't otherwise be picked for "the team" and to love them to life all in the name of Christ.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for picking me. Thank you for sending Jesus to die in my place for my sins. Thank you for my salvation. I know, Lord, that you love all people from all nations and that you're calling me to go. Show me how You're calling me to take action and answer the call to go, taking the good news to all the world.



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Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in **all** you do and He will show you which path to take. Proverbs 3:5-6

Have you ever seen an iceberg? A few months ago, I spotted an "iceberg," and just like the Titanic, we smashed into it. I remember thinking, "I totally called that!" and even felt a little prideful about it, except that what I observed was just 1/10th of the entirety of the situation.

We are only able to see the tip of the iceberg. What we can't see is the vast majority of the iceberg that lies below the water. But God sees the *whole* iceberg. He also sees the dark ocean around it, and the earth far down below it. He is fully aware of every component surrounding the iceberg. He created that iceberg and the fresh mountain water that froze and compacted to create a massive glacier.

It's so easy to fall into the trap of trusting our own understanding. God wants more from us. That moment when we say, "I called that!" is the exact moment that we need to pause and ask God what we're missing, or what we're not able to see.

Maybe that means getting our scuba gear on, and going for a dive, in an attempt to understand more. Maybe that looks like surrendering what we think we know, and asking God what we need to know. Or MAYBE, we don't need to understand, but instead we need to rest in the knowledge that all things are under God's authority, and we can FULLY trust in Him.





"Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love makes up for all offenses." Proverbs 10:12

When hatred remains in the heart it isn't hurting the person we harbor it towards; it is hurting us. Only with the love of Jesus can we forgive, and only after forgiving can love remain in the heart. True agape love is the antidote to hatred.

Is there anything keeping hatred in your heart? Jesus wants your heart to be free of it so it can be fully open to all He has for you. As you pray this, imagine placing all your offenses and offenders into God's mighty hand!

Abba Father, please search me, search my heart. Where hatred is found, help me to forgive. Help me to not just forgive but to replace that hatred with Your true *agape* love. Father, I want to be more like You, and I know you do not condone hatred of my fellow man. Thank you, Father, for being my example through Christ Jesus' love of how to live in Your will and Your way. I give You all the praise, honor and glory. In Jesus' mighty Name I pray, amen.



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"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find me when you seek Me with **all** your heart. Jeremiah 29:11-13

It is such a humbling realization when we grasp that YHWH, the Creator of all time and the universe it governs has plans for *us*! Now, while the real-time audience of this verse was an idolatrous Israel that was being sent into seventy years of captivity for worshipping other gods and not keeping the Sabbath, the prophecy can also be applied to our lives because the principles are true to God's character.

He has plans. In other passages it says He has ordained all things (Rev. 4:11). That means if he planned all things. He planned us!

When we call on Him, He hears us! Scripture is FULL of people crying out to God and being heard by Him. The act of salvation itself is that of a sinner crying out to and being heard by the Almighty.

But this is my favorite. He says He will be found by us when we seek Him with ALL our heart! That is a promise! "I'm not hiding from you," YHWH whispers. However, He knows that only when we are seeking with our whole hearts, in desperation or devotion, will our spiritual eyes be opened so we can actually "see" where He is and how He is moving.





March Madness is in full swing as I'm typing this. Sixty-eight of the best college teams fighting for a national championship. This year, a number 15 seed (the 60th worst team out of 68 teams) made it to the Sweet 16. This is only the third time in history that has happened! I don't know anything about Saint Peter's University, but I just can't help but root for them. If I had the ability to help or empower this scrappy little underdog team to victory, I would.

You know who else has a thing for underdogs? God does. And, it just so happens He *does* have the ability to empower them and lift them up. Look at this passage in the book of Psalms:

The Lord is near to **all** who call on Him,  
to **all** who call on Him in truth. Psalm  
145:18

Two things about this verse that are important. First, David writes that the LORD is near to **all** who call on Him. Not just some or even most, but He is near to **all!** Sometimes when we feel unworthy because we've been beaten down emotionally, made fun of or abandoned, we think that no one wants anything to do with us. We assume that God must feel the same way as everyone else. Why even reach out? Well, good news, God doesn't care about everyone else's opinion of you. He is ready to walk alongside the underdog as long as you need Him!

The second part says that we must call on Him in truth. The Christian Standard Bible uses the word "integrity." What God is communicating is that we should should make sure



we all have people we know who don't deserve Heaven. And it's tough to think that God can redeem them too. But the truth is, none of us deserve Heaven! We have all sinned and fall short of God's glory (that's another day's devotional), but all of us can be made alive in Christ if we put our faith in Him! Even that guy!



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"Cast **all** your cares on Him, because He cares about you." 1 Peter 5:7

I had a teacher in Bible college, Chris, who told us about a time when his wife was having a difficult time, spiritually. She was crying to her husband about all the ways that she was struggling and how she continued to worry and stress over the situation. After listening for awhile, Chris said, "Bonnie! Is God there or not? Is He real or not? Does He care or not?"

More than 14 years later, I still remember these questions. Of course we know the answer to all three is *yes*. But Chris's point was that Bonnie was not living as though she believed that God was there, was real and cared about her. If we *really* believe that, what does it look like? How does it change our demeanor and outlook? Think of a time in your life when you really knew that God cared about your situation. What was that like? (If you haven't experienced that yet, ask God to give you an opportunity to choose to actively believe Him. Don't worry - He will!)

When we look at today's verse, I see two amazing phrases. The first says to *cast* our cares on Him (other versions say to *throw*). Can you imagine a baseball pitcher trying to hang on to the ball while he is throwing it? It doesn't work! In the same way, when we cast our cares, we need to both release our burden and actively give it to Jesus. Don't get me wrong - this isn't always easy. I recall times in my life where it felt like a breath-by-breath job to release my fear again and again...and somehow it keeps rolling back to me! But remember! He is there, He is real and He cares! The second phrase in our verse is the amazing motivation that drives Jesus to carry our burdens so faithfully. Read it again. *Because He cares about you*. Jesus isn't rolling His eyes every time you cry out to Him. He doesn't sigh and hold out His hand, annoyed that you're approaching Him with this problem *again*. The Word says He welcomes your cares,



I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do **all** things through Christ, who gives me strength.”  
Philippians 4:12-13

**M**ost Christians have Philippians 4:13 memorized. We see it slapped on t-shirts and coffee mugs. It is commonly used to encourage a sports team to victory or the employee fighting for that next big raise or dream job. But how many of us actually take the time to soak in verse twelve?

As Paul is sitting in a Roman prison, he writes these words to us. Have you learned this “secret of living” that Paul speaks of? If there is one thing we know about life, it’s that our circumstances are always changing. Life is a rollercoaster, full of ups and downs. But guess what, friends?! God isn’t! He is unchanging and constant. And Paul knew that. His heart was content in his God, knowing that any circumstance he walked through, his loving Father was near and ready to work in and through Paul’s weaknesses. Paul clung to the Lord’s promise; “My grace is sufficient and all you need. My power works best in weakness.” (2 Cor. 12:9).

In studying Paul’s life and from reading verse 12, we know that Paul endured much hardship. He had seasons where he had plenty, but also seasons where he had little (being shipwrecked, beaten, left for dead). Brothers and sisters, whatever season you are walking through; whether it be a season of plenty or want. A season of severe health decline,





Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and **all** these things will be added unto you. Matthew 6:33

It's 1:15am again. Why am I awake? Did I say the wrong thing? Did I do enough? Did I spend too much time on my phone and not enough with family? What are my goals? Am I successful? Why do I have this knot in my stomach? Why can't I sleep? Who can I trust? Why can't I sleep? What is my purpose? *Why can't I sleep???*

Comparison. Inadequacy. Ambition. Responsibility. Activity. Productivity.

We are building our kingdom. From 5am to midnight, our schedules are full and we are addicted to productivity. "How can we do more?" It's the opposite of peace. And the hamster wheel turns.

Otherwise, how will we get what we're after? How will we get what we need? How will we find peace?

But somehow, the King of Kings reveals to us ever so gently that we are missing the mark. In the middle of the pursuit of *our* kingdom, Jesus offers this simple truth that many of us have heard time and time again. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and *His* righteousness and **all** these things will be added unto you."

Shift, focus and surrender. How counterintuitive. Surrender the worries of the day. Surrender inadequacy, ambition, responsibility, activity, productivity and comparison. These things are distractions. Seek *Him* first and surrender



In 1931, Seymore Simons wrote a song entitled "All of Me." The first line in the song says "All of me; why not take all of me? Can't you see, I'm no good without you"! While this was not meant to be a sacred song to be belted out by some powerful church choir, I think the words ring true for us as Christians. I mean, what are we without Jesus in our lives? When our days feel long and hard and lacking hope, we turn to the One Who created us in His image and wants us to live our lives in abundance.

"I will thank You, Lord, with all my heart. I will tell of **all** the marvelous things You have done." Psalm 9:1

Have we forgotten how powerful a thank you can be, and more importantly, how our Father in heaven never tires of hearing how grateful we are for His grace, mercy and His love? And then, when David says, "I will tell of **all** the marvelous things You have done," he isn't saying to keep it the biggest secret that you ever had. We should be ready to tell anyone and everyone about this Man Who has transformed us.

In this verse, David reminds us to not only give thanks, but to transform our hearts into thankful hearts. To open our eyes to **all** the wonderful works and deeds that He has done. This is a short verse, but it packs a lot of punch and is a reminder of God's love and faithfulness.

So, today when you go to God in prayer, tell Him, with all your heart, what marvelous things He has done in your life. And then, be bold enough to ask Him, "**all** of me...why not take **all** of me?"





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“Love bears **all** things, believes **all** things, hopes **all** things, endures **all** things.” 1 Corinthians 13:7

Wow. I don't know about you, but any time I have read through “The Love Chapter” (1 Corinthians 13), I come away feeling exhausted! How could anyone love like this? Seriously, take a quick read through that chapter. All the things that Love does are listed in increasing speed, fervor and challenge. It all comes to a head in this verse, and it seems like Paul can't even elaborate on anything - he just needs to spit it all out! This love is insane! If you're a Christ follower, then you have been on the receiving end of this amazing love. The God Who created every cell in your body (and every other body) to work together and Who can hold all the stars in the universe in His hand, wrapped Himself in human flesh. He walked on our dirt roads, sat and ate with us, and in an incredible act of obedience to the Father and out of love for us, endured the cross. He was willing to experience the cold of death wrap around His body, even though that is the complete opposite of Who He is. What could have given Jesus the power to do this? This incredible, impossible love we read about in this chapter. Paul also talks about it in his letter to the Romans: “God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (5:8).

The New Testament is full of commands for us to love one another (Luke 6:35, John 13:34-35, John 15:12, 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 4, and many more. Search in your Bible app or in your concordance to see them all!). We are bound to encounter people that are just not so delightful to love. And





Have you ever thought that your personal stance on a topic was definitely right – righteous – morally right or justifiable? During a Bible study, a dear friend shared her personal story of her early understanding of the topic of sin. When the subject of sin came up, my friend was emphatic in stating: “I don’t sin; I keep the Ten Commandments. I am not a sinner.” To our group she recalled that statement again and again, laughing, emphasizing her experience: “I am not a sinner; I keep the Ten Commandments.” Romans 3:10 reminds us “There is no one righteous, not even one.” Romans 3:23 says “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” That leaves us pretty hopeless by ourselves. Yet, we serve a righteous God who provides a way for us. Romans 3:22 gives us hope: “This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” The righteousness of God has been made known to us.

Our God is righteous in **all** His ways and faithful in **all** He does. Psalm 145:17

I love the Jewish Bible version, “Adonai is righteous in **all** His ways, full of grace in all He does.” GRACE: that undeserved favor that He has given us through his Son Jesus.

Yes, now our friend understands her dependence on God Who alone is righteous in all His ways. With His grace and faithfulness, she has grown and held tightly to Him, even through tremendous physical pain.

As I make determinations about circumstances going on in my life and in our world today, I am reminded of Isaiah 55:9, that His thoughts are much higher than my thoughts and His ways are much greater than my ways. He sees the bigger picture; He knows the end from the beginning; He sees exactly where we are in His timing. And in all of this He is righteous, faithful, and so full of grace. That grace we need so desperately each and every day. Today our world gives us little hope and we are greatly in need of His grace.

Our only hope is in His faithfulness as we see the devastation in Ukraine,



Once, while in Thailand, I helped a group of missionaries construct bridges in a small village built on water. All the huts floated 5-10 feet above a half-acre pond. The residents would toss their daily trash out of their house and into the static water. They even had an outhouse in the middle of this large pond that emptied into the water we were working in. Needless to say, the water was filthy! Add to that 80% humidity and 85 degrees outside, and I smelled as bad as I looked at the end of the longest day of my life.

We had a long drive back to where we were staying and even though I washed my hands and probably splashed some water on my face, I still smelled like a crowded teen locker room after a triple overtime game. My only solace was that the rest of the team smelled almost as bad too and a shower was close!.

I love this verse:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from **all** unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

God purifies us from **all** unrighteousness. He doesn't do things half heartedly. Why would He? He has unlimited power and energy. It's just as easy for Him to forgive all your sins as it is to forgive one thing! When He forgives us, He forgives us completely, fully. You have been returned to spotless. Are you walking in that shower-fresh, clean-sheets-on-the-bed feeling? Well, according to this passage there is one thing we must do to receive that. One step and God takes care of a hundred little unrighteous moments. What is that one step?





*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
O my soul, worship His Holy Name.  
Sing like never before, O my soul.  
I'll worship Your Holy Name.*

*The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning;  
It's time to sing Your song again.  
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me,  
Let me be singing when the evening comes.*

*You're rich in love and You're slow to anger,  
Your Name is great and Your heart is kind;  
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing,  
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.*

*And on that day when my strength is failing,  
The end draws near and my time has come;  
Still my soul sings Your praise unending,  
Ten thousand years and then forevermore.*

**T**his song, 10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord), by Matt Redmond, has been a go-to song for me in tough times when I needed to remember that God is worthy of praise no matter the circumstances. As I praise, I allow God in. As I feel God drawing closer, I find myself praising more. He has been there all along, but I don't always feel it until I open up and let Him in. Praise allows this to happen.

In today's passage, David praises God:

*"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and **all** that is within me, bless His holy Name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not **all** His benefits, Who forgives **all** your iniquity, Who heals **all** your diseases." Psalm 103:1-3*







There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of **all**, who is over **all** and through **all** and in **all**. Ephesians 4:4-6

I have been a part of the body of Christ for my entire life. That is probably a bit crazy for someone who didn't grow up in church. I was born on a Monday, at church the following Sunday (my dad was a pastor and my mother was die-hard), and headed to church camp at a week old. I graduated from a Christian college, was called into full-time ministry, and we have experienced the body of Christ across the nation and around the world.

One of the most profound things about the body of Christ is its unity. Even across theological and denominational lines, there is a heartbeat for oneness. Why? How can people who are in various states of division - language, geography, methodology, theology - be moving toward oneness? Ephesians 4 tells us.

The body of Christ is *one* body, because it belongs to Jesus. We are united by *His* Spirit, Who is *one*. His hope, faith, and baptism tie us to Him, and *He* is inextricably unified with Himself (Father, Son, Spirit). It follows that as we continue to belong to and pursue Him, we will be unified as well.

Ephesians 4 goes on to show that this oneness is possible for and accessible to us, even in our current broken places



**21** DAYS OF PRAYER was created out of a desire to quiet ourselves, sit in obedience and expect to hear God speak. We invite you to spend the next three weeks in prayer. Dedicate 21 minutes a day to reading the devotional, writing your response and listening keenly for the voice of God through His Word, even if you've never heard it before. Holy Spirit, we invite You to speak to us!

The following icons will represent specific entries that would be especially great to read and discuss with others:



Family



Discipleship Partner



Small Group