

Sweeter
than
HONEY

A 365-DAY
DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY

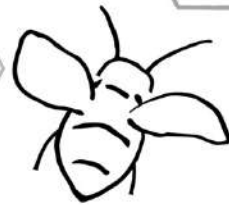
HOW SWEET ARE YOUR WORDS TO MY TASTE,
SWEETER THAN HONEY TO MY MOUTH!

PSALM 119:103

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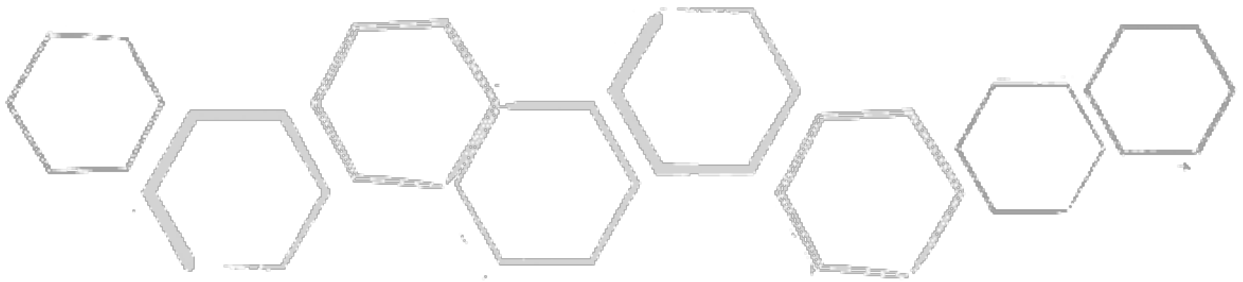
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Dedication

Growing up, my father told me time and time again that I could do anything I put my mind to. My father had a growth mindset mentality before growth mindset was even a thing. He firmly believed that ability could be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent were just the starting point. His confidence in me created a love for learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishments. Those words, *“You can do anything you put your mind to”* spoke truth and life into many dreams and have shaped me in a way that no other spoken words have. His faith in my abilities gave me courage and planted seeds of hope for the future.

When I was in elementary school, I was head-strong and stubborn. I was a handful for my dear parents. Bless their hearts! I was that child they write books about. I remember my mother’s dread of parent-teacher conferences. I didn’t like them much either. I recall one in particular where the teacher had written on the back of my report card that Patsy was stubborn. There was a discussion about that, and I can still hear my mother’s voice today telling that teacher *“Stubbornness is good when you get it headed in the right direction.”* That was life-changing for me! It was a true statement, and my mother would spend the next ten years trying to get that stubbornness headed in the right direction.

Dad, because you said, *“You can do anything you put your mind to”* and Mom, because you said, *“Stubbornness is good if you get it headed in the right direction,”* *Sweeter Than Honey* is dedicated to you.



Thank you

I pray that when people read *Sweeter Than Honey* they will see Jesus, and I have these fine people to thank for making that happen. Thank you to Harold Pulver for his careful work on dating the books of the Bible. Thank you to Michelle Jarrell and her co-worker at BJU Press for helping to set a style guide for references in *Sweeter Than Honey*. Thank you to an awesome editor, Amanda Baker. To all of you friends who assisted in these ways, your input has been invaluable! You have helped to make this book a treasure that will touch lives for years to come. Thank you!

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Prologue

What if we spent a few quiet moments with God each morning? What if we were intentional about making time for it? What if we committed to doing that all year long and by the year's end we found that we had read the entire Bible!? How many times, on January 1, have you committed to reading the Bible from cover to cover in a year? I have made that commitment too many times to count, and I have failed too many times to admit. A few years ago though, I used a one-year, chronological order of book authorship, Bible reading itinerary. Did you know that Genesis was not the first book of the Bible to be written? While plans like this vary somewhat, because it is simply impossible to put an exact date on some books of the Bible, the plan I used begins with the book of Job. *Sweeter Than Honey* is patterned after that Bible reading Itinerary.

When I read God's Word each morning, I find inspiration and insight that keeps my day on track. Join me on this journey, friend. Let's settle in with His Word—it's His Love Letter to us. Did you know that? Let's read it like a Love Letter, expecting to glean something for our walk with Him every day. Let's look for peace in the chaos and strength for our weaknesses. The Bible is alive and relevant. Each book was written by men under divine inspiration from God. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*"

Each day, we'll read a passage of Scripture and a short devotional from that passage. By the end of the year we will have read through His entire Love Letter in chronological order of book authorship—the whole Bible! Even on our busiest days, we can carve out a few minutes to refocus on the important. Can't we? We may have to get up a little earlier, when the house is still and quiet, or stay up a few minutes after the others are tucked in for the night, but we can do this! I know we can!

You'll find encouragement on every page of this book—encouragement to seek God above all else. The strong, spiritual emphasis will challenge you to turn to God for daily direction and experience His presence in a whole new and intentional way. *Sweeter Than Honey* will become more to you than just another daily devotional, it will become a keepsake as you record prayers and participate in thought-provoking, practical exercises that touch every aspect of your life and draw you closer to our Creator.

Let's be intentional this year about focusing on God's Word and the truths found there. Let's let it inspire us to live out our faith each day in a way that causes those we come in contact with to want what we have found. I pray that each of these practical devotionals meets you right where you are with the life-giving Scripture you need for that day to guide you on your journey to know God better and become more like Him in the coming year. God sees you, friend. He knows you by name, He knows the number of hairs on your head (even though that's always changing, right?), and He cares about every detail of your daily existence. He wrote you a Love Letter. Let's dive in! Scan the QR code to join us over at the private, *Sweeter Than Honey* Facebook group and share your thoughts. Find like-minded friends and let's do this together. We're waiting for you!



january

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT **JOB**

The book of Job is the 18th of 39 books in the Old Testament

Written by: Author unknown

Written when: Unknown although it's thought to be around the time of Abraham, 1900 BC

Time period covering: Between 2100 – 1900 BC

Noteworthy: Job may be the only book of the Bible written prior to Genesis. The book of Job is the story of a man (Job) who goes through extreme testing and trials with the loss of his children, all that he owns, and eventually his health.

Pivotal passage: *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth.”* (Job 19:25)

Points to remember:

- Job's blessings are described in chapter 1. In chapter 2 we see his losses incurred as a result of Satan's trials.
- Chapters 3-37 are comprised of Job's conversations with three of his close friends. They have come to comfort Job, but instead, they thwart their own efforts by accusing him of deserving these trials because he has sinned. Job has not sinned, and he refuses to say a bad word about God.
- Chapters 37-40 are a record of God's conversation with all of them, especially Job, with strong speech on why they are not big enough or wise enough to question God.
- Chapter 41 closes with God restoring all that Job has lost and giving him twice as much as before, including 10 more children.

January one

JOB 1-4: PRAYING FOR PROTECTION

How often do you pray a hedge of protection over your family? I pray that prayer quite often, especially over our children and grandchildren. I remember when our children first began to drive, my prayer for that hedge of protection was strong! Let's look at what happened to Job in chapter 1 when God's hedge of protection was removed. Job was *"blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil"* (1:1). He had seven sons and three daughters, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yokes of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and many servants. The Bible tells us that *"this man was the greatest of all the people of the east"* (1:3). We go on to read in this passage that Job *"would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings"* (1:5) for his children. *"For Job said, 'It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did continually"* (1:5). Basically, he intentionally got out of bed early every morning to pray a hedge of protection over his children, and the Bible tells us that he did that continually. Job sees the importance of God's hedge of protection, even before it's removed.

Let's look briefly at what happened when God's hedge of protection was removed from Job, his household, and all that he owned:

1. *"The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword."* (1:15)
2. *"The fire of God fell from Heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them."* (1:16)
3. *"The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword."* (1:17)
4. *"Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead."* (1:18-19)

Can I encourage you today, January 1, to make a commitment to pray a hedge of protection over your family—parents, siblings, spouse, children, grandchildren—daily this year, continually, just as Job did? List the first names below of those you will be praying for this year:

Pray _____

january two

JOB 5-8: COMMIT YOUR CAUSE

In Job chapter 5, we find the first of Job's three friends, who sought to console him, addressing Job. Eliphaz the Temanite begins speaking in chapter 4, continues into chapter 5, and also speaks to Job in chapters 15 and 22. (The word *Temanite* most likely indicates that Eliphaz was an Edomite or member of a Palestinian people descended from Esau.)

This is part of what Eliphaz has to say to Job: *"As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause, Who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number: He gives rain on the earth and sends waters on the fields; He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end. They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope at noonday as in the night. But He saves the needy from the sword of their mouth and from the hand of the mighty. The poor have hope and injustice shuts her mouth"* (5:8-16).

Let's look at seven points Job's friend makes:

1. God does great and unsearchable things. (5:9)
2. God does marvelous things that cannot be numbered. (5:9)
3. God controls the weather, the climate, and the harvest. (5:10)
4. God lifts up the lowly and those who mourn. (5:11)
5. God is our safety and the giver of success. (5:11-14)
6. God saves the needy and gives hope to the poor. (5:15-16)
7. God shuts the mouths of injustice. (5:16)

I am so glad we serve a God Who does so many great, unsearchable, and marvelous things that they literally cannot be numbered! He controls the environment we live in. He lifts us up when we mourn. He is our safety, our hope, and will ultimately shut the mouths of injustice.

God is all of this and more, but the best advice Job's friend gives him is found before any of this in verse 8: *"As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause."* Whatever you are struggling with today, friend, remember the seven points Eliphaz makes, and also remember to seek God and commit your cause to Him as Eliphaz encouraged Job to do.

January three

JOB 9-12: ACKNOWLEDGE HIS SOVEREIGNTY

In Job 9, we find the second of Job's three friends, Zophar the Naamathite (most likely from a place in Arabia called Naamah), addressing him. Unlike friends Eliphaz and Bildad, Zophar only speaks twice. He speaks to Job again in chapter 20. Here in chapter 9, Zophar suggests that Job's suffering could be a punishment from God, and he goes into great detail about the consequences of living a life of sin.

What I find most interesting about this passage though, is Job's response, in chapter 12, to his friend's accusations. In verses 13-25 of chapter 12, we find Job with a clear understanding of God's sovereignty: *"With God are wisdom and might; He has counsel and understanding. If He tears down, none can rebuild; if He shuts a man in, none can open. If He withholds the waters, they dry up; if He sends them out, they overwhelm the land. With Him are strength and sound wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are His. He leads counselors away stripped, and judges he makes fools. He looses the bonds of kings and binds a waistcloth on their hips. He leads priests away stripped and overthrows the mighty. He deprives of speech those who are trusted and takes away the discernment of the elders. He pours contempt on princes and loosens the belt of the strong. He uncovers the deeps out of darkness and brings deep darkness to light. He makes nations great, and He destroys them; He enlarges nations, and leads them away. He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander in a trackless waste."*

Do you need to be reminded today of the sovereignty of God and acknowledge His sovereignty over your life? The next time you wonder about His sovereignty, remind yourself of the points Job makes here:

1. God tears down and none can rebuild. (12:14)
2. God shuts a door and none can open. (12:14)
3. God withholds the rain and the land dries up. (12:15)
4. God sends rain and the land floods. (12:15)
5. God reigns over the deceived and the deceiver. (12:16)
6. God owns counselors, judges, kings, princes, elders, and priests. (12:17-21)
7. God makes nations great and also has the power to destroy them. (12:23)

Maybe today you're thinking about a door God shut that you want to be open. Remember His sovereignty over every part of your life, and rest in the knowledge that He is working all things for your good.

january four

JOB 13-16: I WILL HOPE IN HIM

Job 13 is a chapter of hope. Job, speaking to his friends says, *“Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it. What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God. As for you, you whitewash with lies; worthless physicians are you all. Oh that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom! Hear now my argument and listen to the pleadings of my lips. Will you speak falsely for God and speak deceitfully for Him? Will you show partiality toward Him? Will you plead the case for God? Will it be well with you when He searches you out? Or can you deceive Him, as one deceives a man? He will surely rebuke you if in secret you show partiality. Will not His majesty terrify you, and the dread of Him fall upon you? Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay. Let me have silence, and I will speak, and let come on me what may”* (13:1-13).

What I like most about this chapter is, *“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him...”* (13:15).

All of this happened to Job—he lost all of his children, most of his servants, his livestock, possessions, barns, and houses. Now, his friends have turned against him, and what does Job say? *“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him...”* (13:15). Job preaches a message of extreme hope!

I have a little exercise for you. Today, I want you to list seven things that give you hope in God:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Job still holds on to hope in God, even with all he’s been through, and we should too.

January five

JOB 17-20: MY REDEEMER LIVES

In Job chapter 18, the third of Job's three friends addresses him. Bildad the Shuhite is a descendant of Shuah, son of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2), whose family lived in the deserts of Arabia. Bildad is convinced that Job is in the wrong—in wrong standing with God—and he lets Job know it in no uncertain terms.

What I love most about this passage though is found in Job 19—Job's answer to Bildad's accusations:

"He has put my brothers far from me, and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me. My relatives have failed me, my close friends have forgotten me. The guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger; I have become a foreigner in their eyes. I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer; I must plead with him with my mouth for mercy. My breath is strange to my wife, and I am a stench to the children of my own mother. Even young children despise me; when I rise they talk against me. All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me. My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth. Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me! Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh? Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!" (Job 19:13-27)

Job lists, in verses 13-22 of chapter 19, all that he has lost—his brothers and sisters, all those who knew him, his relatives, close friends, guests in his house, maidservants and manservants. He is even a stranger to his own wife, young children despise and talk against him, his most intimate friends abhor him, those who once loved him have now turned against him, and his health is gone. Job has lost everything!

However, in verse 25 Job says something profound, something we all need to be reminded of from time to time: *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth."* This statement is so important to Job and so powerful that he prefaces it with *"Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever"* (19:23-24).

Job knew that his *Redeemer lives!* Today, let's remember that—*I know my Redeemer lives!*

January Six

JOB 21-24: PERCEIVE, BEHOLD, AND SEE HIM

In Job 23:8-14, Job once again answers his friend, Eliphaz: *“Behold, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive Him; on the left hand when He is working, I do not behold Him; He turns to the right hand, but I do not see Him. But He knows the way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come out as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and have not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food. But He is unchangeable, and who can turn Him back? What He desires, that He does. For He will complete what He appoints for me, and many such things are in His mind.”*

Are you in a place today, friend, where you do not see God working, where you cannot see His hand? Job was there too! He felt as if he were in right standing with God—although his friends tried to convince him otherwise—yet he did not see God working and could not see His hand. Job makes three simple statements in verses 8-9 about how he felt. He says:

1. *“I do not perceive Him.”* (23:8)
2. *“I do not behold Him.”* (23:9)
3. *“I do not see Him.”* (23:9)

Is that where you are today? You do not perceive God’s working in our life. You do not behold His hand over your circumstances. You simply do not see Him, but you know He’s there. Let’s take a look at the confirmation we read from Job. Job knows God is there working in his life, and in his circumstances, even though he does not perceive, behold, or see Him. This is what Job encourages us with:

1. *“He knows the way that I take.”* (23:10)
2. *“My foot has held fast to His steps.”* (23:11)
3. *“I have kept His way and have not turned aside.”* (23:11)
4. *“I have not departed from the commandment of His lips.”* (23:12)
5. *“I have treasured the Words of His mouth more than my portion of food.”* (23:12)
6. *“He is unchangeable... what He desires, that He does.”* (23:13)
7. *“He will complete what He appoints for me and many such things are in His mind.”* (23:14)

Be encouraged and remind yourself of these things today. Even when you can’t perceive, behold, or see God working in your circumstance, know that He is, just as He was in Job’s life.

January seven

JOB 25-28: A PRAYER FOR WISDOM

Job's dissertation, in chapter 28, on finding wisdom is fascinating!

"Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold that they refine. Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. Man puts an end to darkness and searches out to the farthest limit the ore in gloom and deep darkness. He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives; they are forgotten by travelers; they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro. As for the earth, out of it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. Its stones are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold. That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon's eye has not seen it. The proud beasts have not trodden it; the lion has not passed over it. Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden He brings out to light. But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living. The deep says, 'It is not in me,' and the sea says, 'It is not with me.' It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.' God understands the way to it, and He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When He gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, when He made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then He saw it and declared it; He established it, and searched it out. And He said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'" (Job 28:1-28)

After all that man has searched out in the earth, he has not found the one thing he most needs—wisdom. But Job tells us clearly that wisdom is found in the fear of the Lord, in understanding, and in turning away from evil. Today, let's say a prayer for wisdom. Record that prayer here:

Pray _____

January eight

JOB 29-32: WHERE IS UNDERSTANDING

In chapters 29-31 of Job, Job first recalls how good his life was before all of this calamity came upon him and his family. Then, he gives a final summary and defense of his situation to his three friends—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite.

In chapter 32, Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite of the family of Ram, a young man who has held his tongue all of these days, speaks. Elihu has listened to the older, and assumed wiser, men reply to Job about his situation and he is full of anger because of their response or lack of response.

“And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said: I am young in years, and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you. I said, ‘Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.’ But it is the Spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. It is not the old who are wise, nor the aged who understand what is right. Therefore I say, ‘Listen to me; let me also declare my opinion.’ Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your wise sayings, while you searched out what to say. I gave you my attention, and, behold, there was none among you who refuted Job or who answered his words. Beware lest you say, ‘We have found wisdom; God may vanquish him, not a man.’ He has not directed his words against me, and I will not answer him with your speeches. They are dismayed; they answer no more; they have not a word to say. And shall I wait, because they do not speak, because they stand there, and answer no more? I also will answer with my share; I also will declare my opinion. For I am full of words; the Spirit within me constrains me. Behold, my belly is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins ready to burst. O I must speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer. I will not show partiality to any man or use flattery toward any person. For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away.” (32:6-22)

Elihu was patient in his response to Job and Job’s three friends. He was respectful because of their age—he was younger. But then, when he can hold his words no more, he speaks and one thing he says caught my attention.

“...it is the Spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand” (32:8).

Are you in a place today where you are seeking understanding? Ask the Almighty! It’s in the breath of the Almighty, that Spirit that resides within you, that understanding is found. If you’re seeking understanding today, friend, first seek God. Seek His Spirit within you and ask for the understanding you need.

January nine

JOB 33-36: PRAISING GOD

Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite of the family of Ram, has already addressed Job in chapter 32. Now, here in chapters 33-36, he continues his address to Job and also to Job's three friends.

Then, in chapter 36, Elihu praises God for His greatness:

“Behold, God is mighty, and does not despise any; He is mighty in strength of understanding. He does not keep the wicked alive, but gives the afflicted their right. He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne He sets them forever, and they are exalted. And if they are bound in chains and caught in the cords of affliction, then He declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they are behaving arrogantly. He opens their ears to instruction and commands that they return from iniquity. If they listen and serve Him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness. But if they do not listen, they perish by the sword and die without knowledge...”

Remember to extol His work, of which men have sung. All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar. Behold, God is great, and we know Him not; the number of His years is unsearchable. For He draws up the drops of water; they distill His mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of His pavilion? Behold, He scatters His lightning about Him and covers the roots of the sea. For by these He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance. He covers His hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. Its crashing declares His presence; the cattle also declare that He rises.” (Job 36:5-12; 24-33)

Let's look at three things Elihu praises God for in verses 5-12:

1. God is mighty in strength of understanding. (36:5)
2. God gives the afflicted their right and does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous. (36:6-7)
3. God opens our ears to instruction and commands. (36:10)

After Elihu praises God, he goes on in verses 24-33 and tells Job to remember to praise the work of God. He reminds Job (and us) that men have sung about His works and that all mankind has looked on it—*"man beholds it from afar"* (36:25), he says. Today, let's praise God for Who He is and for His wonderful works! Record the attributes you are praising God for today:

January Ten

JOB 37-39: A GLIMPSE OF GOD

In Job 37, Elihu continues to speak proclaiming the majesty of God. Then, in chapters 38-39, finally, God speaks to Job. He doesn't just speak, He questions Job!

Let's look at a few of the questions God asks Job:

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (38:4)

"Who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?" (38:8)

"Have you commanded the morning since your beginning or caused the dawn to know its place?" (38:12)

"Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?" (38:16)

"Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness?" (38:19)

"Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail?" (38:22)

"Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain and a way for the thunderbolt?" (38:25)

"Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew?" (38:28)

"Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?" (38:31)

"Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you?" (38:34)

"Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions?" (38:39)

This questioning of Job, by God, continues on into chapter 39, and I find it quite fascinating! It gives us just a small glimpse into Who God is. So often, I think we forget Who He is. We forget His power and His might. His sovereignty over all of life and creation leaves our minds when we are full of worry and concern for today's troubles.

Today's troubles hold no power over Him, friend. None at all! He is God Almighty! Remember that today. Remember that when you struggle with your circumstances, when there are decisions to make, and when the impossible needs to happen. Remember, He is God Almighty!

January eleven

JOB 40-42: BUT NOW MY EYE SEES YOU

In Job chapter 40, God continues to speak to Job. He speaks to him of the might of the Behemoth and the Leviathan. He reminds Job that He created these beasts, just as He created Job. In Job 41:10-11, God asks Job, “...Who then is he who can stand before Me? Who has first given to Me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole Heaven is Mine.”

Then we read Job's confession and repentance in chapter 42: “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, and I will speak; I will question You, and You make it known to me. I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (42:2-6).

Job knows that nothing is impossible for God. Nothing! He knows that what God purposes cannot be undone by man. He realizes now, that he did not understand God at the beginning of his trials as he understands Him now at the end. Trials are like that. They can help us know God better.

I love what Job says next, “I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You” (42:5). Isn't that what trials are all about? We hear of God, we read of Him in His Word, but it's through the trials in our lives that we really see Him clearly. This is where we begin to understand God.

In the end, the Lord restores Job's fortunes to him giving him twice what he had before his trials began.

“And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold. And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. And Job died, an old man, and full of days.” (Job 42:10-17)

Let's remember today what Job learned through all of this. “I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You” (42:5). Let's pray with a desire to really see God clearly today!

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT **GENESIS**

The book of Genesis is the 1st of 39 books in the Old Testament

Written by: Moses

Written when: 1430 BC

Time period covering: Between 4004 – 1805 BC

Noteworthy: Genesis is the first book of the Bible and covers the longest span of time—over 2000 years. Stories we find in Genesis include creations, Noah’s Ark, the Tower of Babel, Abraham’s journey, Isaac almost being sacrificed, Jacob’s Ladder and his name changed to Israel, and Joseph being kidnapped ending up in Egypt.

Pivotal passage: *"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."* (Genesis 1:31)

Points to remember:

- Chapters 1-12, or everything up until the birth of Abraham, are considered pre-history. This first part of the book includes creation, the Great Flood and the Tower of Babel.
- Chapters 12-50 include the stories of the great Patriarchs. This includes the stories of Abraham, his son Isaac, and Isaac’s son Jacob. Jacob was also the father of Joseph who is not considered to be one of the Patriarchs but is equally important. These men make up the beginning of the nation of Israel.

January twelve

GENESIS 1-4: MADE IN HIS IMAGE

When I read the story of creation, what catches my attention most is that everything He made was good and we are made in the image of God. Being made in His image is something we need to remember.

Ten things God created in Genesis 1:

1. Waters (1:2)
2. Light (1:3)
3. Day and Night (1:5)
4. Heaven (1:8)
5. Earth (1:9)
6. Seas (1:10)
7. Vegetation (1:11)
8. Sun, moon, and stars (1:16)
9. Fish and birds (1:21)
10. Living creatures (1:25)

God created all of this in six days and called it all good. Then we come to verses 26 and 27 of Genesis:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:26-27)

Although God called all He created, in verses 2-25, good, none of that was made in His image. Only one thing that God created was made in His own image and that was mankind—us. And actually, Genesis 1:26 says, *“Let Us make man in Our image.”* That *Our* to me signifies that we are made in the image of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the Triune God, the Trinity. This is the image we are made in.

We are made in His image and after His likeness. Are we living that today? Does that truth shine through in our agenda like a beacon of light for all the world to see? Is it evidenced in our day to day dealings with the people we come in contact with? Things made in the image of God should be different. They should be a light to the world. You are made in His image. Choose to walk like it and be the light today!

January thirteen

GENESIS 5-8: OUR WALK WITH GOD MATTERS

Genesis 5, reminds us once again that we are created in the image of God.

“When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and named them Man when they were created” (5:1-2). We were made in His likeness, both male and female.

I find it fascinating, as we read down through the decedents of Adam to Noah—Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, that each one of these the Bible records died, with the exception of Enoch. Genesis 5:21-24 tells us, *“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.”*

God must have loved the company and fellowship He had with Enoch so much that the Bible says, *“and he was not, for God took him” (5:24).* Oh, that that would be said of us! Twice this passage says that *“Enoch walked with God...” (5:24).* Can that be said of us?

Our walk with God matters!

It matters not only that others will see our walk and talk are the same—consistent, but it also matters that others will see and recognize that we are different from the world. It matters not only that others will see and want what we have, but it also matters because we are hardwired to crave that good company and fellowship with God as Enoch had.

I think one of the saddest passages found in the Bible is found in chapter 6 of Genesis: *“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart” (6:5-6).*

Today, and every day, I don’t want to grieve the heart of God. I want that good company and fellowship that my soul craves and was created for.

Let’s look for ways to walk with God today—because it matters!

January fourteen

GENESIS 9-12: ABOUT THAT RAINBOW

Again, in Genesis 9:6, we are reminded that we are made in the image of God. *“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image.”*

We are only into the ninth chapter of Genesis, and yet this is the third time God has reminded us of the fact that we are made in His image. First, in Genesis 1:27, then in Genesis 5:3, and now here in Genesis 9:6. It’s an important fact to remember as we go about our daily lives that we are to reflect the image of our Creator God.

When is the last time you gazed up into the sky at God’s promise, His covenant with all mankind? I’m talking about a rainbow.

In verses 7-17 of Genesis 9, God tells Noah to *“be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it”* (9:7). Then God makes a covenant with Noah, his sons, their offspring (for all future generations—that’s us!), and every living creature:

“Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ‘Behold, I establish My covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish My covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’ And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember My covenant that is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.’” (Genesis 9:8-17)

What caught my attention in this passage is this: God says, *“I will see it and remember”* (9:16). He sees the rainbow, and He remembers. He sees us, and He remembers.

God remembers His promises, friend. You are not forsaken. If He can see the rainbow as we see it, surely He also sees our bad days and remembers us. He is a promise keeper! So, the next time your eyes gaze on a beautiful rainbow, remember God’s promise. Remember you are not forsaken He remembers you!

January Fifteen

GENESIS 13-16: THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

I have long found the story of Sarai and Hagar, in Genesis 16, fascinating. Back in chapter 15 of Genesis, God made a covenant with Abram saying, *“After these things the Word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great’”* (15:1).

Abram goes on to tell the Lord that he is childless and his only heir is Eliezer of Damascus (a servant in his household). Then, we read the covenant in verses 4-6: *“And behold, the Word of the Lord came to him: ‘This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.’ And He brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward Heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then He said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”*

Abram believed God. However, in chapter 16, we find Sarai and Abram taking matters into their own hands when Sarai offers to Abram Hagar (her handmaid) as a wife in order to produce an offspring. That relationship did produce offspring, but not the offspring God promised Abram. It also produced much strife between Sarai and Hagar, and continues to produce strife throughout the world even today.

After Hagar conceived, there was contempt between the two women. Verse 4 says, *“And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.”* And then verse 6 tells us that, *“Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.”* There was bitterness between Sarai and Hagar.

Then we read, *“The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, ‘Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?’ She said, ‘I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.’ The angel of the Lord said to her, ‘Return to your mistress and submit to her’”* (16:7-9).

Bitterness can develop when we are mistreated. I know. I have been there. You’ve probably been there too. But God doesn’t intend for us to live in bitterness. He comes to us, much like He did Hagar, and asks, *“Where have you come from and where are you going”* (16:8)? God instructed Hagar to return to Sarai and submit. Hagar had to forgive Sarai even though she was mistreated.

I have long said, *“Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.”* I believe that with all my heart. It’s the truth.

Is there someone you need to forgive? Return, submit, and give yourself that gift of forgiveness today.

January sixteen

GENESIS 17-19: BUT HE LINGERED

In chapter 18 of Genesis, we find Abraham interceding for Sodom. God says to Abraham, *“Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to Me”* (18:20-12). I don’t think I’d ever read this before like I did today. Is this prayer? Had the good people of Sodom and Gomorrah been praying for relief from all the wickedness? We find the same thought in chapter 19 as well. *“For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it”* (19:13). There has been an *outcry* to God against the wicked people of Sodom, and He has come to judge this place and its inhabitance.

When we continue on into Genesis chapter 19, we read of the Lord’s great mercy when He rescues Lot, his wife, and their two daughters from Sodom. In my opinion, Lot was undeserving of this great mercy, as we all are undeserving of God’s great mercy. Let’s look at how Lot behaved in chapter 19:

1. *“Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom”* (19:1). This indicates that he most likely had some kind of leadership role in this wicked city.
2. *“But he pressed them strongly”* (19:3). Lot seems to be trying to hide the wickedness of the city by having these three men/angels stay in his home and not the town square.
3. *“Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please”* (19:8). Lot offers his own, virgin daughters to the men of Sodom.
4. *“But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting”* (19:14). Lot is not taken seriously by his sons-in-law, maybe because he wasn’t?
5. *“As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city... But he lingered...”* (19:15-16). And finally, we see Lot lingering in the wicked city he did not want to leave.

Have you ever found yourself *lingering* somewhere God never intended for you to be? I have.

Maybe you are lingering today. Are you lingering in bitterness? Unforgiveness? Thoughts of past failures? A wrong relationship? Hidden sin? A lifestyle God has asked you to surrender? A lack of seriousness about the things of God? *“But he lingered,”* in Genesis 19:16, are three sad words. But God’s mercy is great! *“So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city”* (19:16). God is merciful to those who linger, friend.

January seventeen

GENESIS 20-22: IT WAS I WHO KEPT YOU

In Genesis 20:1, we find Abraham sojourning in the land of Gerar. A conversation between Abimelech, king of Gerar, and God is recorded in verses 3-7. Abraham and Sarah had lied to the king, telling him that they were brother and sister. This is a partial truth in that Abraham and Sarah had the same father but not the same mother. The Bible records Sarah as being “*a woman beautiful in appearance*” (Genesis 12:11), and Abraham feared that if he were found to be her husband, they would kill him.

“But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, ‘Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.’ Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, ‘Lord, will You kill an innocent people? Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.’ Then God said to him in the dream, ‘Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I Who kept you from sinning against Me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.’” (Genesis 20:3-7)

Sometimes, like King Abimelech, we make mistakes in the integrity of our hearts. Maybe we made a mistake due to the lack of knowledge or because of false information. Isn’t it reassuring to know that we serve a God not only of justice but also mercy! “*...it was I Who kept you from sinning against Me. Therefore I did not let you touch her*” (20:7). It was God Who kept King Abimelech from sinning.

How many times, I wonder, has God been merciful to me in spite of my ignorance? How many times has He stepped in and set up a boundary to keep me from sinning against Him because of a lack of knowledge or false information? How many times has He not let me go somewhere, do something, see something, touch something, feel something, hear something, because of His great mercy toward me, a sinner?

Maybe you can think of an incident in your own life where this is true. Thank God for His mercy! Remember “*it was I Who kept you*” (20:7). Record your prayer of thankfulness here:

Pray _____

January eighteen

GENESIS 23-26: PLEASE GRANT ME SUCCESS

The Bible doesn't tell us the name of Abraham's servant mentioned in Genesis 24, only that he was *"the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had"* (24:2). Abraham is old, *"well advanced in years"* (24:1) the Bible says. In the previous chapter we read that he had just buried Sarah, and she was 127 years old when she died. Mindful of the covenant that God made with him—to make him a great nation—Abraham knows he needs to find a wife for his son Isaac. He sends his most trusted servant back to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor, his homeland, to search for a wife for Isaac.

The Bible records that the servant took *"all sorts of choice gifts"* (24:10), and ten of Abraham's camels. Then we read, *"...outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water"* (24:11), Abraham's servant prays this simple, yet powerful, prayer:

"And he said, 'O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.'" (24:12)

Abraham's servant was petitioning God for success, but not in some small way. He goes on to lay out his petition before God:

"Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that You have shown steadfast love to my master." (Genesis 24:13-14)

The servant was looking for a special girl—a girl, who in the heat of the day would not only offer him a drink of water but also offer to draw water for the ten camels accompanying him. That's no small task!

This was no small thing Abraham's servant was asking of God, but he simply prayed, *"please grant me success today"* (24:12).

What do you need to succeed at today? Have you prayed about it? Or, are you willing to go out and try to find *success* in your own power? God cares about the little things in our lives—not just the ten camel experiences. Pray about the big things of course, but pray about the little things too.

January nineteen

GENESIS 27-30: HE WILL KEEP YOU

In Genesis 28, we read about Jacob's dream. Genesis 27 sets the stage for us. In chapter 27, Jacob tricked his brother Esau for the second time. Previously, he tricked him out of his birthright. Now, in chapter 27, he tricks him out of the blessing of their dying father, Isaac. Because of this, Esau was angry enough with Jacob to kill him. So Jacob is sent away to Paddan-aram to the house of his grandfather, his mother's father, to take a wife from one of the daughters of his mother's brother, Laban. Along the way, he stops to sleep for the night and dreams a dream about a ladder that reaches from earth to Heaven.

"And behold, the Lord stood above it [the ladder] and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.'" (Genesis 28:13-17)

Four things I want us to remember from this passage today:

1. *"I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." (28:15)*
2. *"For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (28:15)*
3. *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." (28:16)*
4. *"How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." (28:17)*

If you are a Christian, wherever you are today, God is with you and He will keep you wherever you go. He will not leave you until He has completed His work in you on this earth and then you will be with Him for all eternity.

The Lord is in this place, wherever you are Christian friend, even when you don't feel it. Whether *"this place"* is your home, your office, your schoolroom, or a situation... wherever it is, the Lord is there. This *"place"* is awesome! It's God's place. It's where He wants you today. It's the gate of Heaven for you.

So today, embrace your *"place"* because He will keep you, and *"let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in Heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

January twenty

GENESIS 31-34: GOD SEES YOU

Jacob had served Laban for twenty years. During those years, even through difficult times, Jacob prospered. Surely God had blessed him. We find here in chapter 31 of Genesis that Jacob was fearful of Laban and Laban's sons because of the prosperity God had blessed him with. Because of this, Jacob chose to flee back to his homeland with his wives Leah and Rachel, their children, and all their possessions.

After a three-day journey, Laban discovered that Jacob had left and this made him angry. Laban pursued Jacob for seven days until he finally caught up to him in the hill country of Gilead. This is part of their conversation where Jacob speaks to Laban:

"These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hand...." (Genesis 31:38-42)

This passage spoke to me as I hope it does to you.

Are you laboring for the Lord in a place that is not your "homeland"—a place outside your comfort zone? Maybe you have been there for years, like Jacob laboring in Laban's household. You have been honest. You have done your best to serve the Lord there. You have borne loss. You've gone beyond the call of duty. You've done more than required. You've walked the extra mile. It's not been easy. The circumstances have been tough. Maybe you work for an employer who has been difficult to work with. Maybe they've even changed your wages ten times as Laban did Jacob's.

I want to assure you today that God is on your side. You will not go away empty-handed. He sees you. He sees your affliction and the labor of your hands.

Be encouraged today in the place where you labor for the work of the Lord and the work of His kingdom. You are not alone. God is on your side. He sees you, friend, just as He saw Jacob serving in Laban's household. God sees you!

January twentyone

GENESIS 35-38: PUT AWAY THE FOREIGN GODS

In yesterday's Scripture reading, there was a portion about Rachel stealing the gods of her father, Laban, as she and Jacob and all of Jacob's household fled "*Paddan-aram to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac*" (Genesis 31:18). Laban caught up to them after a seven-day journey and searched for his stolen gods, but did not find them.

"Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle and sat on them. Laban felt all about the tent, but did not find them. And she said to her father, 'Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me.' So he searched but did not find the household gods" (Genesis 31:34-35). And that's the last we hear about the stolen gods, until now.

Today, in chapter 35 of Genesis, we find Jacob telling his household to put away their foreign gods.

"God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God Who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.' So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God Who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.'" (Genesis 35:1-3)

What "*foreign gods*" do we need to put away today? What "*altar*" do we need to make "*to the God Who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone*" (35:3)?

Six modern-day gods we serve:

- Careers
- Success
- Image
- Entertainment
- Materialism
- Money

None of these meet all our needs like the One, true God. None of these "*answers me in the day of my distress*" or have "*been with me wherever I have gone*" (35:3). These are temporal gods. Today, let's put away the foreign, temporal gods and focus solely on the One, true, eternal, living God Who answers us in our distress and never leaves us wherever we go.

January twentytwo

GENESIS 39-42: BUT THE LORD

In Genesis 37:12-36, we read about Joseph's being sold into slavery by his own brothers. Today, in chapter 39, we find him being thrown into the king's prison because of false accusations from Potiphar's wife. (Potiphar was the captain of the guard under Pharaoh's rule.) Joseph endured a life of hardship and affliction, but look at what the Bible records in chapter 41 of Genesis:

"Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. 'For,' he said, 'God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.' The name of the second he called Ephraim, 'For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.'" (Genesis 41:50-52)

Through his hardships and afflictions, God made Joseph fruitful, and in spite of his hardships and afflictions, God made Joseph forget the difficult journey. Look back in chapter 39 at how many times the Bible records that even through hardships and afflictions the Lord was with Joseph:

1. *"The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man." (39:2)*
2. *"His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands." (39:3)*
3. *"From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field." (39:5)*
4. *"But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." (38:21)*
5. *"The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed." (39:23)*

Five times in this one chapter the Bible tells us that the Lord was with Joseph during his journey of hardships and afflictions. I especially love what it says in verse 21, *"But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love..."* *"But the Lord"* has got to be three of the most beautiful words in the Bible!

Friend, are you on a path littered with hardships and afflictions today? *"But the Lord"* (39:21) is with you and will show you steadfast love, just as He did Joseph.

"But the Lord" (39:21). Never forget that!

january twentythree

GENESIS 43-46: BUT GOD

I love the story of Joseph so much because it reminds me of how God uses even the evil of man for our good and God's glory. Because Joseph's brothers hated him they sought to kill him. But one brother, Reuben, intervened and suggested that instead, they sell him to some Midianite traders that were passing by. We read about how God was with Joseph and even through hardships and afflictions Joseph was successful. He was so successful in the land of Egypt that he was second only to Pharaoh. In Genesis 41, we see that Pharaoh appointed Joseph to gather and store grain for years in preparation for a famine. After the famine began, Joseph sold that grain to the people of Egypt and other countries.

Joseph's brothers had been to Egypt at least once already to buy grain because of the wide-spread famine, but they did not recognize Joseph. On this trip though, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers.

"So Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come near to me, please.' And they came near. And he said, 'I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God.'" (Genesis 45:4-8)

Again, in this passage, we see one of my favorite phrases in the Bible, "but God" (45:8). I can say, "but God" over and over again when I look back at my life. Maybe you can see His hand in your life as well. Can you see the "but God" moments in your life? They were times of great difficulty—"but God." They were times of pain, trials, and heartache—"but God." Maybe they were times men meant for evil—"but God."

Today, let's think back over our life and see how many "but God" moments we can recognize. Then, let's thank God for those moments. List the four most significant "but God" moments in your life and thank Him specifically for those today:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

January Twenty-four

GENESIS 47-50: BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD

"And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.' He answered, 'I will do as you have said'" (Genesis 47:29-30).

Joseph's father, Jacob, died. As Joseph promised his father before his death, in Genesis 47, he did not bury him in Egypt. After Jacob's death, Joseph and his brothers took Jacob's body to be buried.

"Thus his sons did for him as he had commanded them, for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place" (Genesis 50:12-13).

And then we come to this part of the passage:

"When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.' So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'Your father gave this command before he died: 'Say to Joseph, 'Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.' Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' But Joseph said to them, 'Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.' Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them." (Genesis 50:15-21)

Joseph's brothers treated him badly, even conspiring to kill him. But God spared Joseph's life. Even though Joseph endured a great many hardships and afflictions, he's come to the point in his life where he can say to his brothers, *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good"* (50:20).

Maybe today friend, you are there in that place of hardship and affliction. You're at that place where you can say *"but God meant it for good"* (50:20).

Maybe you're not there yet, but you're getting there. Let's pray today that God gives us the heart and will to say, *"but God meant it for good."* It's not easy. I know. But with God's grace and mercy we can say it.

Say it to yourself, out loud, just as Joseph said it to his brothers, *"but God meant it for good."*

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT **EXODUS**

The book of Exodus is the 2nd of 39 books in the Old Testament

Written by: Moses

Written when: 1400 BC

Time period covering: Between 1525 – 1400 BC

Noteworthy: Exodus contains the stories from the birth of Moses through the 40 years of the Exodus, including Moses at the Burning Bush, the Ten Plagues of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the giving of the Ten Commandments.

Pivotal passages: *"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."* (Exodus 34:6)

Points to remember:

- Exodus begins with the birth of Moses in 1426 BC, some 280 years after the death of Joseph. Chapters 1-2 record events before Moses is called to lead Israel out of Egypt.
- Chapter 3 tells of Moses' Burning Bush experience and his call by God.
- Chapters 7-12 cover the Ten Plagues of Egypt and the Passover, which was established with the tenth plague that required the death of the firstborn of both man and beast.
- In chapter 13, the Exodus begins, and in chapter 20 we first read of the Ten Commandments.
- Chapter 31 tells the story of the Golden Calf, and other chapters in the book contain laws and detailed instructions for the construction of the first Tabernacle (portable Temple) in the desert.

January Twenty-five

EXODUS 1-3: THIS IS WHERE WE GROW

Genesis ends with: *“So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt”* (Genesis 50:26). There were almost 300 years between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus. In Exodus 1:7-8, we read, *“But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph...”* This is where the oppression of the Israelites began.

The Bible records that the Egyptians dealt shrewdly with the Israelites because the Egyptians feared that if war broke out, the Israelites might join the Egyptians enemies, fight against them, and escape from Egypt. The Egyptians set taskmasters over the Israelites and afflicted them with heavy burdens. *“But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad”* (1:12). The Egyptians feared the people of Israel so much that they ruthlessly made them work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard work the Bible tells us.

This new king of Egypt told the Hebrew midwives if a son was born to a Hebrew woman they were to kill him, but if a daughter was born, she could live. *“But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live”* (1:17).

Pharaoh again attempts to kill all the male babies of the Hebrew women: *“Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, ‘Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live’”* (1:22). Honestly, friend, as a mamma I cannot imagine living under more duress than being held captive as a slave by people who hate you (and fear you at the same time) so much that they are willing to kill your sons.

We all live under duress to some extent. We are broken. We are put into situations we don't want to be in. People deal shrewdly with us. Sin is a taskmasters over us. We have afflictions and burdens. We're oppressed. We are treated ruthlessly. We are slaves to our own human nature. We may even be bitter at times. But as a mamma, can you imagine someone standing over you while you give birth waiting to see if your child is male or female and then carrying that male child off to kill it. Or, someone knocking on the door of your home looking for your sons with the intent to kill them. I cannot imagine!

And yet, through all of this, the Bible records that the Israelites thrived and grew stronger. Today, can we just think about our lives, and thank God for the duress, the brokenness, the situations we don't want to be in, the shrewd people, the taskmasters, afflictions, burdens, and oppression. This is where we grow!

January twenty-six

EXODUS 4-6: GOD WILL BE WITH YOU AND HE HEARS YOU

"But Moses said to the Lord, 'Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since You have spoken to Your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.'" (Exodus 4:10-12)

How often do we avoid situations when we might have the opportunity to talk with a friend or acquaintance, or even just someone in passing, about the Gospel because we, like Moses, feel we're not "eloquent" enough to speak? Who made your mouth? God did, and He says, "Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak" (4:10-12).

Even after God reassured Moses, he still felt incapable. So, God sends Moses' brother Aaron to go with him and be the spokesperson: "Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped" (4:29-31).

God heard the prayers of His people, but read chapter 5. Things get worse before they get better! The Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians. They were brickmakers making bricks for the unreasonable Egyptians, and now Pharaoh says that they will no longer be provided straw to make the bricks. They will have to find their own straw, yet the number of bricks they have to produce daily will not decrease.

"I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered My covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.'" (Exodus 6:5-8)

Here are two takeaways from today's Bible reading that I hope will be as much of an encouragement to you as they are to me. Never forget these two things!

1. God will be with you.
2. God hears you.

January twentyseven

EXODUS 7-9: THAT HIS NAME MAY BE PROCLAIMED

Exodus 7-9 records the first seven plagues visited on the Egyptians because of Pharaoh's hardened heart and unwillingness to let the people of Israel "...go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord..." (Exodus 8:27).

There was the:

1. Water to blood
2. Frogs
3. Gnats
4. Flies
5. Death of livestock
6. Boils
7. Hail

God could have allowed Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people go at any time, even without all these plagues. However, with each plague, Pharaoh's heart hardened more, and he chose not to let them go.

Do you ever wonder why God does things the way He does them? Why doesn't He just take the simple and more direct path and get things done quickly? (Honestly, I wonder that a lot! He certainly doesn't do things as we would, does He?) Why did He not allow Pharaoh to simply let the people go without all these horrible plagues? Why did all the water, "...their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone" (7:19), have to be turned to blood? Why the frogs, the gnats, and flies, the death of their livestock, boils, and hail? For one distinct and important purpose:

"But for this purpose, I have raised you up, to show you My power, so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth." (Exodus 9:16)

That's His purpose—so that the name of the Lord would be proclaimed in all the earth!

Friend, we don't always understand why God does things the way He does them. We don't know why He doesn't just take the simple and direct path and get things done quickly. Or do we?

"...so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth" (9:16).

january

twentyeight

EXODUS 10-12: HUMILITY AND LETTING GO

In Exodus 10, we read about the eighth and ninth plagues, the locust and the great, great darkness. This darkness, that lasted three days, was so great that it could be felt. When I read this, it reminded me of another three days—the three days that Jesus spent in the tomb, the three days between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Those three days must have felt to Jesus' followers also like great, great darkness.

Here in Exodus 10, Pharaoh's heart is still being hardened by God; even the hearts of his servants are hardened "*...for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants*" (10:1). We know though, from yesterday's reading, that not all of Pharaoh's servant's hearts were hardened. After Moses and Aaron announce the seventh plague—hail, we read this: "*Then whoever feared the Word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, but whoever did not pay attention to the Word of the Lord left his slaves and his livestock in the field*" (Exodus 9:20-21). So from that, we know that some of Pharaoh's servants *feared the Word of the Lord*, and today, we are going to see that even the hardened heart of Pharaoh begins to soften.

"So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.'"
(Exodus 10:3)

Before the eighth plague—locust, we read where Pharaoh says this to Moses: "*Go, the men among you, and serve the Lord, for that is what you are asking*" (Exodus 10:11).

Before the ninth plague—darkness, he says this to him: "*Go, serve the Lord; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind*" (Exodus 10:24).

After the tenth plague—death of the firstborn, Pharaoh says: "*Go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone*" (Exodus 12:31-32). "*...and be gone*" he says. Pharaoh was done!

Pharaoh refused to humble himself before the Lord. Sometimes, we do the same. Little by little though, he was humbled by the Lord until he finally let the Hebrew people go. Let's not be like Pharaoh! God will humble us as He did Pharaoh. He will make us let go of whatever we are holding on to so very tightly.

How is God asking you to humble yourself today? What is He asking you to let go of?

january

twenty-nine

EXODUS 13-15: PURPOSE IN THE JOURNEY

Today our reading finds us in chapter 13 of Exodus and it just struck me how God rarely does things the way we would. We would take the shortest route, the easiest route, the most secure route. But not God. He has a purpose in the journey and it's not usually just about the destination.

"When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, 'Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.' But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle.... And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people." (Exodus 13:17-22)

"By the way of the land of the Philistines" (13:17) was closer, but God did not lead them that way. He led them in the way of protection, protecting them from themselves *"lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt"* (13:17).

It's easy for us to see the challenges of life and turn the other way and run, isn't it, friend?

God led the children of Israel around *"by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea"* (13:18), and we all know what happened there. But the people were ready for whatever God had in mind. Verse 18 tells us that, *"the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle...."* And the Lord was with them every step of the way. *"And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people"* (13:21-22).

Today, I want you to remember that whatever you are going through, God will not leave you. He is going to be with you for the journey. It may not be easy. It may not be the shortest, easiest, or most secure route, but God has a purpose in the journey and it's not just the destination.

Be *equipped for battle*, through your prayer life and reading the Word, and when you see the challenges of life, remember God rarely does things the way we would. And just like *"The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people"* (13:22), so God will not depart from you.

January thirty

EXODUS 16-18: WHO ARE YOU GRUMBLING AGAINST?

In Exodus 16, we find the Israelites, a month and a half after they departed Egypt, wandering in the wilderness. Little did they know this was only the beginning of a 40-year journey! Six weeks in and they were already grumbling against Moses and Aaron. But is that really who they were grumbling against?

“...the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, ‘Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’” (Exodus 16:2-3)

While in Egypt, they cried out to the Lord asking for deliverance. Now, six weeks into the Lord’s plan of deliverance, captivity looked better. So, they complained and grumbled to Moses and Aaron. But who was their complaint and grumbling really against? Was it against Moses and Aaron, or God?

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am about to rain bread from Heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.’ So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, ‘At evening you shall know that it was the Lord Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because He has heard your grumbling against the Lord. For what are we, that you grumble against us?’ And Moses said, ‘When the Lord gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the Lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against Him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord.’” (Exodus 16:4-8)

How often do we grumble our way through the day? There’s not enough money in the bank. I don’t like the color of my house. The car I drive is old. I wish I had some new clothes.

Who are we actually grumbling against? Who is our Provider? Just like the Israelites, our Provider is God Almighty. If we are grumbling, He is ultimately the One we are grumbling against, and just like in Exodus 16:9, “Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your grumbling,” He hears us.

Personally, I would rather Him hear my praise and prayers of gratitude! How about you? Today, let’s choose gratitude over ingratitude. Let’s look for ways to praise Him instead of grumbling through our day. List some things you will praise God for today:

January thirtyone

EXODUS 19-21: ALL THAT THE LORD HAS SPOKEN WE WILL DO

“On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.

So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do.’ And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.” (Exodus 19:1-8)

“All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (19:8). How often do we say that in our minds, to ourselves? We have good intentions of following Him, just like the Israelites did at the foot of the mountain, but when it comes right down to it, we falter. We don’t trust and we don’t obey.

In chapter 20 we read about the giving of the Ten Commandments. These still apply to our lives today. If you are like me, you’re struggling at the first one already. I find myself putting a lot of things before God.

1. You shall have no other Gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol, nor bow down to it or worship it.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
4. You shall remember and keep the Sabbath day holy.
5. You shall respect your father and mother.
6. You shall not commit murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false evidence against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

We forget that we once said, *“All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (19:8).* Today, let’s review these commandments and ask God to show us where we are faltering. Let’s remember our commitment to obey Him and do all that He has spoken.

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Hi friend, I hope you will join me on this journey!

I've been a Christian since the third grade. That's where the journey began for me. Throughout my life God has continued to pursue me for which I am grateful. No doubt, left to myself I would have made a great big mess of things! Maybe you feel the same.

I'm a daughter, wife, mother of four, and grandmother. I love coffee and dark chocolate more than the average person. I'm also a Christian lifestyle blogger and the content manager at www.InstaEncouragements.com. If you haven't visited us over at the blog, or on social media, I hope you will very soon. Stop by and say hello. I'd love to hear from you!

Join us over at the private, *Sweeter Than Honey* Facebook group and share your thoughts. Find like-minded friends and let's do this together. We're waiting for you!

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Patsy