

JANUARY 2014

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE



Your love, LORD,
reaches to the
heavens, your
faithfulness to
the skies.

Psalm 36:5

God's Faithfulness

**MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE
FOUNDER'S WEEK
FEBRUARY 3–7, 2014**

BE HOLY

MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE FOUNDER'S WEEK 2014

This conference, held annually in Chicago since 1901, features an outstanding lineup of prominent Christian teachers, speakers, and musicians offering life-transforming Bible teaching and worship. Free and open to the public, this year's conference takes place on February 3–7 and will focus on the inspiring theme of Be Holy.

ONLINE AND ON THE AIR

If you can't join us in person, we invite you to watch conference sessions live online at www.foundersweek.org or listen on your local Moody Radio station. To see a list of Moody Radio stations, visit www.foundersweek.org. If you miss a session or want to watch or hear it again later, audio and video conference sessions will be available online after the conference ends.

BIBLICAL MESSAGES AND UPLIFTING WORSHIP

Grow in your knowledge and love for Jesus Christ as you learn from some of the best Christian leaders and expository Bible preachers in America. Be energized and inspired to live more fully for the Savior.



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Music and Worship provided by Tim Stafford, Charles Butler and the All Chicago Choir, Moody Bible Institute's Music Department ensembles, the Chicago Tabernacle Choir, and recording artist Aaron Shust.

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Great Is Thy Faithfulness



If you've ever visited a chapel service at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, you know that we love to sing. The entire Moody community gathers once a week in the historic Torrey-Gray

Auditorium—employees and students—and sings hymns and songs of praise. The sounds of hundreds of voices worshipping God fill the auditorium, and it is nearly impossible not to be moved. This part of our chapel service resounds with praise for our God.

One of our favorite songs is the classic hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Written by Thomas Chisholm in 1923, the words were inspired by Lamentations 3:22–23: *Great is Thy faithfulness / Oh God, my Father / There is no shadow of turning with Thee / Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not. / As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.*

We often sing this beautiful hymn without remembering the scriptural context of the lyrics found in the book of Lamentations. While these verses assert the unfailing goodness of God, they are surrounded by chapters that describe the misery of the people of Judah. The Babylonians had destroyed the temple and carried them into captivity. This was a bleak time for God's people—yet the prophet

Jeremiah, the author of this book, could still say: God is faithful.

As we study God's Word, we find that no matter what we are going through, God is faithful to us. He is present and certain. He is our ultimate example of faithfulness. We do not have a temperamental deity who experiences wild mood swings or who changes His mind about His people. He loves us faithfully and without end. He loves us so completely that He sent His only Son to die on the cross for our sins, then raised Him from the dead, and sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in us. In every life situation we can truly say that God is with us.

The question is not whether God is faithful. He has proved Himself over and over again, in the pages of Scripture and in the events of our lives. The question is whether we will be faithful to Him. How do we respond to our God, whose mercies are new every morning? Will we follow Him in obedience? Will we serve Him in love?

As we study the faithfulness of God in this month's *Today in the Word*, join me in celebrating His amazing goodness to us. Join me in asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the parts of our hearts that need to renew our commitment to Him. Let us be faithful servants, bringing Him all the glory, pressing on in our calling, and finishing the race well. God is faithful to us. Let us be faithful to Him.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



The Immutability of God

We live in a world of constant change; even the atoms that form the building blocks of all matter are in constant motion. According to the psalmist, we are like the grass or “a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more” (Ps. 103:16). But God is different. In the words of Irenaeus, God is “ever the same, equal and unalterable.”

Theologians sometimes describe this attribute of God as *immutability*. God is immutable with respect to His essence, being, and knowledge. He is the great I AM who “does not change like shifting shadows” (Ex. 3:14; James 1:17). Jesus shares this attribute. He is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). At the incarnation Jesus Christ took to Himself a human nature that He did not previously possess. He “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Yet His divine nature, which already existed from eternity past, remained the same. The Spirit likewise shares this eternal and unchangeable nature (Heb. 9:14).

God does not need to gather additional information or deal with unforeseen circumstances. He does not alter His ultimate purposes as a result of our behavior. God’s perfect knowledge and power enable Him to incorporate the

independent and contingent acts of all He has created into His plan. This includes the actions of those who do evil. While we are morally accountable for what we do, our actions will ultimately accomplish only what God has decided beforehand should happen (Acts 4:28).

Immutable does not mean detached or indifferent. The unchangeable God is also “the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3). God is affected by our circumstances; He is aware of our plight and responsive to our cry. The unchangeable God is also engaged with His creation. Passages that speak of God “relenting” employ figurative language to describe how people’s relationship with God or treatment at His hands changed. But these instances do not reflect a change in God Himself but rather the unfolding of His plan (Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:14; 1 Sam. 15:35).

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, the kind of relationship we have with God changes. God rescues us from the dominion of darkness and brings us into the kingdom of His Son. But God’s nature and character never change. Because He does not change, God will always keep His promises. He will never fail us or forsake us.

For Further Study

To learn more about the immutability of God, read *The Attributes of God: Volume 2* by A. W. Tozer (Wingspread).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Maffei

Encounters With Jesus

Each one of us may have a unique life story and distinctive circumstances that shape our path. But we all, as believers, follow the same Christ on our life journeys, and when we tell the story of God's work in our lives—it resonates with other believers. It encourages and brings joy. It shows that we are not alone. It reminds us that we are part of the family of God. And it brings glory to our God who loves us and watches over us. It's important to tell our stories!

Dear readers, thank you for your letters and emails about your encounters with Jesus. What a beautiful illustration to *Today in the Word's* theme this month, God's Faithfulness! We're featuring some highlights of your stories this month, with more to come in future issues.

Holly (via email):

I have been a faithful reader of Today in the Word for the past several years. It is my morning devotional, and I love starting my day reading a passage of Scripture and then reading how I can apply it to my life. I'd like to submit a story on how Jesus spoke to me personally through the pages of Today in the Word.

In October 2011, my younger brother passed away very tragically and unexpectedly. I was so grief-stricken and physically sick that it took me some time to resume my devotions. On October 19, I picked up my Today in the Word, and the reading for that day was Psalm 23. Verse 4 says: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." This was probably the first Scripture I memorized as a child, so I knew it well—but for God's faithfulness to shine through and remind me of these words when I needed most to hear them . . . It helped me see that my brother didn't have any fear dur-

ing his death. Jesus was with him, right beside him, ushering him into glory!

On November 27, my brother's birthday, the key verse for the day in Today in the Word was James 4:14, "You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." Once again, God was speaking to me through my devotion reminding me that our time on earth is but a speck of dust compared to the time we'll spend in eternity.

I don't believe in coincidences where God is concerned. I know He had those specific Scriptures placed on those days especially for me. Thank you to everyone involved in writing, publishing, and editing Today in the Word! Because of your faithfulness, God spoke to me through these pages and brought me peace and comfort in a very difficult time.

Debbie (via email):

My life has always seemed a bit rocky, but with a touch of excitement. I have experienced a lot and also made some very poor

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

God' Faithfulness

"When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"—this question from King David's friends in Psalm 11:3 tempted the king to give up, to flee, and to abandon His God. It may seem a rhetorical question, therefore, needing no answer. But in the next verse, David gives the answer, explaining why he could and would stay faithful: "The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them" (v. 4). David resolved to trust God and not the circumstances of his life. He recognized the trustworthiness of God and chose the way of faith.

Like King David, we face many temptations and challenges in our days. And like him, this month we'll lift our eyes to the Lord's heavenly throne with *Today in the Word's* study. We'll look at God's sovereignty, love, justice, and grace. We'll find joy and assurance in His faithfulness, and we'll see that because of who He is, we can choose the way of faith no matter what. God entrusted us with the gospel, and He expects us to be faithful.

We pray that this month's devotional will encourage you and strengthen your trust in our faithful God. Let us, by faith, see God on His throne of glory, and boldly come to this throne for mercy and grace. As we start the new year, let us resolve to stay faithful.

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God Is Faithful: Creator of Heaven and Earth

A nighttime glimpse of the starry sky, a sunrise over the ocean, a snow-capped mountain peak: these scenes of natural wonder have inspired poets and artists and scientists—and all the rest of humanity—and should draw our attention to the character of God. Surely it is miraculous that a God who created all of these things could also care about the lives of mere mortals.

The wonder of creation points not only to the majesty and grandeur of God, but also to His faithfulness. God designed and created marvels of our natural world, and He also faithfully sustains them. The sun rises and sets each day. The tides go out and come in. The seasons continue their rhythm.

Today's passage poses a question that highlights God as the Creator and Sustainer of life: "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the

breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?" (v. 12). God defies our limited, our earthly understanding. He holds the earth in His capable hands. Isaiah challenges us to know the "Sovereign LORD" (v. 10).

This same God also gently gathers the lambs in His arms (v. 11). What a remarkable juxtaposition: God is not the great "watchmaker" who composed a universe and then ignored it. The God whose arm is strong enough to rule in power is also tender enough to cradle a new mother and her child. This is a faithful God.

Lift your eyes and
look to the heavens.
Who created all
these?

Isaiah 40:26

Throughout this chapter, God's faithfulness is described. God is constant and has existed before the earth (v. 21). He is incomparable, yet faithful to be present with His people. No one and nothing is His equal (v. 25). The mighty and powerful Creator knows and cares for His creation in an unexpected and intimate way.

Apply the Word

We are beginning a new year, a wonderful time to refocus our attention on God and His faithfulness. No matter what we have been through in the past or what lies ahead in our future, God will be faithful. Take time to notice the natural world around you, whether mountains or trees or stars, and be thankful that the Creator of this world also created and cares for you.

Pray with Us

On this first day of 2014, we'd like to thank our readers for all your support and prayers for *Today in the Word* and the ministries of Moody in 2013. Today, let's pray that our study of the Bible this month will give us new insights into God's Word.

God Is Faithful: He Has Done Great Things!

Many countries have harvest festivals when farmers set aside a time to thank God for this faithful abundance. These festivals were popular in both pagan and Christian cultures. In England, “Lammas Day,” derived from “loaf-mass,” was held in late summer to celebrate the wheat harvest. Families brought loaves of bread, made from their first crop, to church to be blessed. The offering was a reminder that God was the giver and sustainer of life.

The first verse of today’s passage provides the context: God is answering His people and taking “pity” on them. God’s jealousy is not characterized by insecurity but by attentive devotion. The word here indicates His complete protection of His people. God’s faithfulness to His people and all of His creation is evident in the renewing pattern of nature. God’s consistent devotion is seen in the cycle of the seasons. While winter may seem long, we can

rest assured that spring will follow and new life will begin again.

“Surely he has done great things!” (v. 20). We are not only to look at the past and the things that God has done for us, but must continue to look at the ways our physical needs are met. God

You will praise the
name of the LORD
your God, who has
worked wonders
for you.

Joel 2:26

provides even for the animals—as trees become green and bear fruit (v. 22). There are times when we may experience devastating loss, as noted by the example of locusts (v. 25). Yet God’s faithfulness is evident when the earth renews and harvest is

abundant again.

In the end, God promises that our needs will be both understood and met. When we look at His hand of provision in the wonders of creation, we should be reassured that He alone is the “LORD your God and that there is no other” (v. 27). He is faithful to creation—and to us.

Apply the Word

Each season should remind us of God’s faithfulness. We see God’s hand in nature as leaves bud, bloom, fall, and bud again. Take a moment to consider times of God’s faithful provision for you. Write down one example in a notebook or spiritual journal, and give thanks for the way God provided for you in the past—and He will do so again in the future.

Pray with Us

Please pray for Moody’s president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, as he embarks on another year of his ministry at Moody—that the Lord will grant him wisdom and discernment in guiding the global ministries of Moody Bible Institute.

God Is Faithful: No Beginning and No End

The wedding ring, which originated in ancient Egypt, was fashioned into a circle to symbolize eternal love. True love, it suggested, has no beginning and no end. In real life, however, romantic relationships do sometimes falter and stop. Marriages end through divorce or death. While we would like to claim that love is eternal, human love is painfully finite.

The book of Revelation provides us with a startling vision of the eternal God who has no beginning and no end. God existed before His creation—and He will exist forever. The words Alpha and Omega are the first and last words of the

Greek alphabet. They echo the idea that God was in existence at the very beginning and will exist at the end. He will always be with us. He will never go away.

This description of God is tied to the faithfulness of His character because we can

be assured of His constant presence. Unlike our human relationships, which are continually in a state of change, God is ultimately dependable. The passage emphasizes the faithful connection between God and His people. He has ordained this relationship to continue to the end. We are His “people,” and He will be with us as our God.

Ours is not a distant God who exists only in the furthest realm of outer space, or worse, only in our imagination; He is up close and personal. Note the description of His care. He wipes away tears. He understands human suffering. He feels our pain.

It is for this reason that God has created a new heaven and new earth. These old things—our existence marked by pain—will be gone. God’s love for us is faithful and eternal.

It is done. I am
the Alpha and
the Omega, the
Beginning and
the End.

Revelation 21:6

Apply the Word

As you walk through your day, notice the things in your life that are temporal. Life has starts, which are often marked by anticipation and excitement. But we also experience things that end. What an assurance it is to realize that our God has no beginning and no end. He will not change. He will be with us today and in the future. We can depend on Him.

Pray with Us

Larry Beach, who operates the Copy Center on Moody’s Chicago campus, helps many departments to serve Christ effectively with all the printed materials the Copy Center provides. Would you uphold in prayer his service here at Moody?

God Is Faithful: Constant and Never Changing

Thomas O. Chisholm was a simple man, born in a log cabin in 1866. He gained little education, money, or fame, but he wanted to serve God. One day, inspired by Lamentations 3:22–23, he wrote the words to the hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” He gave them to his friend William Runyan, who set the words to music. Little did Chisholm know that the hymn would one day be known around the globe. Runyan shared it with his friend Dr. Will Houghton, then president of Moody Bible Institute, who asked musician George Beverly Shea to sing it over the school’s radio station. With Billy Graham, Shea would use the hymn in their worldwide evangelistic campaigns.

Chisholm declared that God was faithful, even though his daily life was not always easy. The author of Lamentations recognizes that we may have times of trouble. But even when we are surrounded by affliction, we can still have hope. We can rest as-

sured that though we may face troubling situations, God’s faithful love for us will not allow us to be “consumed” (v. 22).

This passage emphasizes daily living. We are reminded to focus on God’s faithfulness every day, each morning, to renew our hope and to encourage our souls. There is an emphasis on meditation, which means taking time to sit in silence and reflect on the character of God. By regular times of focusing on God, we will actively place our hope not on our earthly circumstance but on the unchanging, faithful character of the God we serve.

Because of the
LORD’s great
love we are
not consumed
... great is your
faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22–23

“The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him” (v. 25). We can depend on these character traits of God: His goodness, His care, His unfailing love, His compassion. Great is His faithfulness!

Apply the Word

If you aren’t familiar with the hymn, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” be sure to look up the lyrics in a hymn book or online. Sing the hymn or listen to a recording and reflect on this characteristic of the God we serve. Consider the ways God has shown His faithfulness to you and to the ones you love. We can be thankful that “there is no shadow of turning” with Him!

Pray with Us

As a ministry that depends on the faithful giving of supporters, Moody strives to reflect that trust with faithful stewardship of resources. Ken Heullitt, chief financial officer, requests your prayers for his team to always serve diligently and please Christ with their service.

God Is Faithful: He Never Lies or Changes His Mind

In the movie, *Liar, Liar*, Jim Carrey plays a career-consumed father who has become accustomed to lying. He lies to his children, his ex-wife, and his colleagues. He's a divorce lawyer who twists the truth to win his cases. He has the habit of lying to everyone he meets. One day, his son is granted a wish that his dad will be unable to tell any more lies. In this modern-day fable, the truth is forced upon the father, and it finally sets him free.

In today's passage King Saul found himself caught in a web of lies. Saul had been given specific orders by God, orders that he had not only deliberately disobeyed but then also lied about. Samuel was angry and emotional about this betrayal by the king. Saul had lied to Samuel, but—most importantly—he had betrayed the almighty God. Even when confronted with his actions, Saul continued to deny the accusations.

He who is the
Glory of Israel
does not lie or
change his mind.

1 Samuel 15:29

"But I did obey the LORD," Saul insisted (v. 20).

Saul offered proof of his obedience by pointing to his offerings. Hadn't he shown his loyalty to God by his great accomplishments and showy gifts? In turn, Samuel again confronted the king, explaining that God prefers obedience to sacrifice. Saul's arrogance had led him into a form of idolatry, because he thought more highly of himself than of God. His lies came from a desire to protect himself from any accusation.

When Saul tore Samuel's robe, it represented God's decision to tear the kingdom of Israel away from his leadership. This decision was final. Unlike Saul, who had betrayed his nation, his friend, and his God, the Glory of Israel "does not lie or change his mind" (v. 29). He would be faithful to His people and provide them with better leadership.

Apply the Word

As we look at truthfulness as one of God's characteristics, consider the role of truth-telling in your own life. Why do we use words to cover up our actions? The God we serve is a God of constancy and truth. He honors those who are truthful even in difficult circumstances. Pray today that God will enable you to put His glory above self-protection.

Pray with Us

Keeping our prayer focus on those who work in finance on Moody's Chicago campus, please add our Controller's Office to your prayer list. May the Lord bless the service of Michael Duong, Tom Jones, and Marie Bailey.

God Is Faithful: He Has a History of Justice

People sometimes seek spiritual and life advice in odd places. Some turn to palm reading or fortune tellers to determine their next course of action. For a while, a toy called the Magic 8 Ball was popular. You would shake the ball and ask it a question. In a shadowy window, an answer would appear: “Yes,” “No,” or “Try Again Later.” The plastic toy promised answers to life’s big decisions. Unfortunately, it was just a toy, and the answers were completely random. It had no capacity to judge difficult situations or dispense life advice.

A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

Deuteronomy 32:4

rael. God is faithful, upright and just; but His people were prone to unfaithfulness. The people of Israel were familiar with the history of God’s care for them and their forefathers. The evidence was well documented. Yet they continually failed to trust in God “a warped and crooked generation” (v. 5).

God is referred to several times here as a “Rock” (vv. 4, 15, 18). This metaphor of God as a Rock refers to His solid and unmovable character in contrast to the fickle ways of humans. Again, this speaks God’s ultimate trustworthiness.

At the close of Deuteronomy 31, Moses had finished presenting the words of the Law to the Israelites. While the people were still assembled, he recited what we know as “The Song of Moses” in chapter 32. The song begins with a description of the character of God, and then contrasts it with the behavior of Is-

rael. People rejected this known Rock for that which they did not know. They turned to gods that were new and untested (v. 17). Moses encouraged the people to remember that we can depend upon God from the moment we are born until the day we die. God is completely faithful and always true.

Apply the Word

Where do you turn for answers to life’s problems? Do you first go to God for help? Many times we turn to everything and everyone but God. We go to friends or spouses. We confide in doctors and read advice columns. God has proven Himself completely dependable and perfectly just. He is faithful to hear our prayers and to answer. Turn to Him today with the burdens of your heart.

Pray with Us

Please lift up in prayer these additional staff members of the Controller’s Office at Moody: Linda Wahr, Annita Smith, Roger Sipes, and Alice Leighton-Armah. Their work may be behind the scenes, but it’s important for all our ministries.

God Is Faithful: Our Righteous and Faithful Judge

Steve Hindalong is a musician known for composing the worship song “God of Wonders” with fellow musician Marc Byrd. During a lone writing retreat in an Arkansas cabin, Byrd strummed a few chords in response to the beauty of the night sky and sang, “Hallelujah, to the Lord of heaven and earth.” Later, Hindalong helped complete the song. He said, “It’s beyond our comprehension really—this notion that the Creator, not just of our world, not just of the Milky Way, but of ALL the galaxies in the universe—wants to share an intimate relationship with each of His children.”

He will judge
the world in
righteousness and
the peoples in his
faithfulness.

Psalm 96:13

heaven to rejoice and the seas to break forth in song (v. 11). Even the trees praise God (v. 12). Is it any wonder then that we, as His creation, respond with songs of praise?

God is portrayed here as not just the Creator, but the One who keeps precise order in the world. Creation rejoices because God is in control. He judges the world. He orders each step. The verses describe a profound respect for this holy Judge. We “tremble” before Him (v. 9). Yet the spirit in this passage is not one of fear but of joy and peace and thankfulness. Ours is a God who has proven faith-

ful in the past. He is present in our future. And, the psalmist rejoices, He will come again to judge the earth.

Psalm 96 begins by praising the God of wonders, the Lord of the universe. The psalm is a jubilant, emotion-filled response to the majesty of God. Words in the psalm describe the Lord’s attributes of “splendor,” “majesty,” “glory,” and “strength.” Each of these attributes is reflected in His creation. The psalmist personifies nature, asking

We can rest in the fact that the God we worship is both glorious beyond our comprehension and intensely personal.

Apply the Word

There is an awesome paradox when we realize that God both created the furthest stretches of our galaxy and also knows each one of us in a personal way. How amazing! We pray to a God who is majestic and glorious, yet intensely concerned with our well-being. Take time to praise God today. Read along with the psalmist and “sing to the Lord a new song” of praise.

Pray with Us

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, is grateful for the prayers of the *Today in the Word* family that he and his team would use wisely and creatively all the possibilities of media in our digital age, for God’s glory.

God Is Faithful: Guarding Our Lives

More than two million people each year visit Buckingham Palace in London to observe the Changing of the Guard. When the Queen is in residence, four soldiers stand sentry in front of the building. Even when the Queen is away, two remain to guard the entrance 24 hours a day. These dignified troops, wearing red tunics and bearskin hats, have maintained duty at royal palaces since 1660. In 1837, Queen Victoria moved into Buckingham Palace. When the guards change duty, the captain of the old guard will touch hands with the captain of the new guard, symbolically handing over the royal responsibility of guarding the Queen.

While we may not have royal guards standing sentry in front of our homes, we can rest assured, based upon today's passage, that God is faithfully guarding our lives. Yesterday we read in Psalm 96 that God is Lord over heaven and earth. The opening de-

scriptions in Psalm 97 are dramatic and almost ominous. It describes the throne and power of the almighty God. "Clouds and thick darkness" surround His presence, yet His "lightning" lights up the world (vv. 2-4). Who is this God who makes the earth "tremble" and mountains "melt" (vv. 4-5). At first, this description may seem more terrifying than comforting.

Yet we can rest assured, as believers, that this God is on our side. He stands guard against evil and protects the lives of the faithful. We can trust Him completely to deliver and protect us. For believers,

God is not darkness, but light. He inspires joy and praise for the righteous.

The dramatic opening description of a God so fierce and magnificent that even nature trembles at His feet should inspire respect in us, and also great comfort. Ours is a God who can and will protect us.

He guards the lives
of his faithful ones
and delivers them
from the hand of
the wicked.

Psalm 97:10

Apply the Word

We know that God is capable of protecting us from harm. The Almighty God who governs the universe is capable of guarding our life and the lives of those we love. While it is tempting to rely on earthly forms of protection, do not forget that your heavenly Creator has given you His promise of protection. Rest assured today that your life is safe forever under God's faithful watch.

Pray with Us

Please join us in praying for Scott Krus, Alice Andrews, Gary Bittner, Paul Carter, Douglas Hainer, and Mark Zimmerman at our Moody Radio station in Cleveland, Ohio. Thank God for leading these talented and committed people to Moody Radio.

God Is Faithful: He Does Not Change

Dr. Henry Jekyll was a fictional character created by Robert Louis Stevenson in 1886. The story told of a man who was battling with the good and evil sides within himself. His nightmarish case of dual personality involved the likeable Jekyll and the evil Hyde. As the story develops, the evil side of his personality grows in power, threatening to completely overtake his nobler self. Eventually he was completely consumed by the cruel persona of Mr. Hyde.

Most people have more than one dimension to their personality. While not as extreme as the case of Jekyll and Hyde, we do know that humans are subject to mood swings that can baffle those around us. It should be some relief, then, to realize that the God we serve “does not change like shifting shadows” (v. 17).

James is writing to believers undergoing both trial and temptation. Many

worried that the source of these temptations was God Himself, who was putting them to some sort of cosmic test. James corrects this faulty assumption, explaining that temptations appeal to our own sin nature. We do know that each of us, as mortal beings, are capable of evil. We struggle to remain pure and holy in a fallen world. And from time to time we do succumb to temptation and sin.

In contrast, God is not subject to this same force. He is completely holy, and therefore He is completely without change. He does not distribute “evil” gifts to His children. Every gift we

get from God is intended for our good. Notice the words in verses 16 through 18: God’s gifts to us are “perfect” and “light” and “truth” filled. We are not subject to divine whims, but to His unchanging love and benevolence. He is faithful to His own good and perfect nature.

Every good and perfect gift is from . . . the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17

Apply the Word

Have you ever had a day where you don’t feel quite like yourself? Perhaps you woke up on the wrong side of the bed? Our mood may be good one day and bad the next, but God is not subject to personality change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Praise Him today for His unchanging character and for His unfailing love to us.

Pray with Us

Today starts students’ orientation on our Chicago campus. Let’s use this occasion to pray for these students. Ask the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts during the semester and to give them guidance in decisions and encouragement in studies.

God Is Faithful: His Law Is Perfect

Some laws must have seemed like a good idea at the time, but to modern minds they seem ridiculous. One newspaper reported that in Missouri, it is illegal to drive with an uncaged bear. Wisconsin state prisons break a law when they serve butter substitutes. In Idaho, it is illegal to give your sweetheart a box of candy weighing more than 50 pounds. In Connecticut, you should ignore the impulse to walk across a street on your hands—it's against the law.

We have talked about God as the Rock and the righteous Judge. In today's passage, He is praised for His complete perfection in ruling the world. God's ways, says the psalmist, are perfect. He begins by surveying the faithfulness of God as revealed in nature. Notice the strong words that depict nature declaring and proclaiming God's glory. Even without an actual voice, it is hard for humans not to understand that there is indeed

a Creator when they survey the grand beauty of the earth.

God's faithfulness is revealed in the daily, cyclical actions that are found in creation. Here He is praised for keeping the sun in place and warming each part of the globe in perfect order. The psalm

The decrees of the
LORD are firm,
and all of them are
righteous.

Psalm 19:9

then compares the perfection of God as revealed in creation to the perfect laws He has prescribed for mankind. Both the laws of nature and the decrees of God for His people are meant to keep life in perfect order. They are described as "perfect," trust-

worthy," "radiant," and "pure." The psalm goes even further to declare that God's ways, His perfect laws, are valuable.

God's faithfulness does not just apply to the order of nature, but to the daily order of our lives. When we follow His Law, our lives will be sweet (v. 10).

Apply the Word

God has given us His decrees in order to protect and preserve our life. A life lived under God's leading will ultimately be better than any plan we could devise. How can we know God's will? Through study of His Word, following the example of Jesus, and openness to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Pray that you will submit your will to the perfect law of God.

Pray with Us

Dr. Thomas Shaw, vice president of Student Services and Enrollment, requests your prayers for his teams in Student Development, Alumni Association, Admissions, Registrar's Office, and other areas that provide our students all the necessary help.

God Is Faithful to Us: He Loves Us Completely

A story was told by rescuers following the earthquake in Sichuan, China. While searching the rubble, the body of a woman was found. She was crouched in a kneeling position, almost as if praying. The house had fallen on her back and killed her. Kneeling down to reach the body, they spotted a 3-month-old baby boy wrapped in a blanket tucked under his mother's lifeless body. Inside the blanket, they found a cell phone with a message still on the screen. It read, "If you can survive, you must remember that I love you."

We love because
he first loved us.

1 John 4:19

First John 4 is a passage worth committing to memory. This passage details God's consuming and complete love for us. In fact, God's love is the source of all human love. Because He loved us, we have the capacity and duty to love one another. All love "comes from God" (v. 8). He is the source and strength of love.

God showed His love to us through the ultimate sacrifice. Because He sent His beloved Son to be crucified, we are granted eternal life. It is hard to comprehend how great an act was the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and how powerful an act was His resurrection from the dead. It was meant to convey the depth of the God's love.

God's faithful love transforms our lives. It drives away fear. It gives us confidence. It also puts our own love to the test. If we claim to love God, yet show hatred toward others, the apostle says we

are a "liar" (v. 20).

God is faithful to love us as we are, and because of that we are called to love one another. If we are His children, we should look like Him through the way that we offer and extend love to others.

Apply the Word

It is important to tell others that we love them. Sometimes we assume that our actions will convey our feelings, but words are still important. Take a moment today to write a note or make a phone call to people you love. Tell them how thankful you are that they are in your life, and express your love for them in words.

Pray with Us

Dean of students, Timothy Arens, and his team guide students through their training at Moody. Join us in thanking God for their service and for the many careers in ministry across the globe, cultures, and generations they help to launch.

God Is Faithful to Us: His Covenant of Love

Wedding vows date back to the Middle Ages. In 1549, *The Book of Common Prayer* offered three choices of vows to the couple. They could each promise to “love and cherish”; the groom could promise to “love, cherish, and worship”; or the bride could promise to “love, cherish, and obey.” Although the word choice may vary, wedding vows are still used today as the promises between two people when they enter the covenant of marriage.

Today’s passage speaks of God’s covenant of love with His bride, the nation of Israel. The book of Nehemiah comes at a troubled time in the history of the nation. Although Israel had a covenant with God, they had continued to disobey Him. Now, they suffered in captivity.

Nehemiah is identified in verse 11 as the cupbearer to the Persian king, a position that gave him both power and

influence. When he heard about the troubles of his people, he broke down and wept (v. 4). A true believer, he turned to God in prayer and fasting, asking God to bless His people despite their continued pattern of unfaithfulness. Nehemiah then offers a lengthy and emotional petition on behalf of the nation of Israel.

LORD, the God of
heaven, the great
and awesome
God, who keeps his
covenant
of love.

Nehemiah 1:5

The faithfulness of God is contrasted with the unfaithfulness of His people. Verse 5 offers a beautiful description of God’s love for His people, a love that does not depend on their actions. God keeps His “covenant of love” to His people. What He has promised will be done. The

nation of Israel was paying a heavy price for their unfaithfulness to God and His commands. Yet if they repented, God was waiting and willing to take them back. Nehemiah suggests that even when people are scattered far from God, He can and will gather them and bring them back to Him (v. 9).

Apply the Word

Today, pray for someone you know for whom is living far from God. Perhaps it is someone for whom you have prayed again and again. Like Nehemiah, intercede on behalf of this person before God. Pray for softened hearts and repentant spirits. Be encouraged that no one is beyond God’s love and grace. God hears your prayers on behalf of those He loves.

Pray with Us

Visitors to Moody’s campus in Chicago always notice how well kept and clean it looks. We thank God for the diligent work of our Exterior Maintenance team: Ryan Yoder, Jacob Santhouse, and part-time student workers.

God Is Faithful to Us: His Love Reaches to the Heavens

One of the best-known landmarks in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is the giant LOVE statue that stands in the center of the John F. Kennedy Plaza. The red painted word LOVE with the iconic tilted letter “O” was installed in 1976 to commemorate and illustrate the city’s motto: “The City of Brotherly Love.”

The second part of the passage focuses on God Himself and His attributes: faithfulness, righteousness, justice, and love. God’s love is abundant and works to preserve His people. Notice the poetic imagery of heights and depths to declare the dimensions of God’s goodness.

Today’s psalm attempts to create an imaginative picture of God’s faithful love for His people, but the tone at the beginning of the psalm is not so glorious. Instead of exalting in God’s love, the first verses reflect on the human capacity for evil. Within the hearts and the minds of the wicked, there is no fear or respect of God. Everything about this person stands in contrast to what is good and honorable; he plots against God night and day. What a contrast to God’s love! While God is faithful in His love toward His people, the wicked are consistent in their disobedience.

I have always
been mindful of
your unfailing love
and have lived in
reliance on your
faithfulness.

Psalm 26:3

The psalm concludes in verses 10 through 12 with a plea for God’s continued provision for the righteous. The characteristics of God have been extolled to describe a God who cares deeply about His people. Now the psalm reminds us that ultimately no evil plan can succeed against

this type of love. God’s righteous hand can and will prevail against the plots of the wicked. Evildoers will ultimately meet their demise. As believers living in a world where wickedness is often evident, we need this reminder.

Apply the Word

The news can often be discouraging. We read about evil plots, threats of war, and violence in schools. Like the psalmist, we can find the capacity for evil in human nature alarming! We must remember that no matter how deeply entrenched evil may be in the hearts of some, that God’s love is stronger, broader, and deeper. He is faithful to His people. He will triumph over the wicked.

Pray with Us

We’d like to thank God for our dedicated faculty who provide both academic and spiritual training for our students. Today, please pray for the Intercultural Studies department: Walter Cirafesi, Stephen Clark, Clive Craigen, and Samuel Naaman.

God Saves Us: Faithful to the End

Doomsday preppers are seemingly ordinary people whose lives have become obsessed with preparing for end-of-the-world scenarios. They go to any length to be equipped, gathering water, food, and supplies needed in case of a major catastrophe that would disrupt civilization. They build shelters to stockpile gas masks and survival gear. Preppers do not know how the world will end, but they are dedicated to being prepared.

The first verse of Revelation explains the purpose of the book. This is a revelation from Jesus Christ to give us a glimpse of what is to come. God does not give us this revelation to frighten us with doomsday scenarios but rather to give us comfort and hope. We are to be reassured that ours is not a future left to chance and survival skills, but one guaranteed by the faithful Finisher of all things.

The book of Revelation starts with a special blessing for those who read it. We are considered blessed if we take it to heart. Why? God urges us to be informed because the end of the world is imminent. Again, to some that may sound like a message of terror, but, to God's children who are freed by His blood (v. 5), it is a message of hope.

Jesus Christ, who is
the faithful witness
. . . who loves us,
and has freed us
from our sins by his
blood.

Revelation 1:5

Many of the churches that received this letter are not described as faithful (see Revelation 2 and 3). We humans may lack perseverance, but Jesus Christ is described as the "faithful witness" to the end (v. 5). This passage ends with a glimpse of Christ's return:

"Look, he is coming with the clouds" (v. 7). The Lord's return will not be in secret; everyone on earth will be aware of His presence. Everyone will know Him. He will return in glory and power and honor.

Apply the Word

Doomsday prophets or movies can dominate our understanding of the future. Instead, Christians should be informed by God's message regarding the end of the world and the return of Jesus Christ. This is not so that we can have secret knowledge, but so that we can trust that the God who began a work in us will complete it and care for us faithfully to the end.

Pray with Us

Again, please pray for the Intercultural Studies department professors: Kyeong-Sook Park, Michael Rydelnik, Elizabeth Lightbody, and Timothy Sisk who have extensive missionary experience and help students fulfill God's call for their lives.

Question and Answer

By Mike Kellogg, Moody Radio Host



Was each day of the Creation week 24 hours long, or did billions of years of

time elapse between the first two verses of Genesis?



This continues to be a topic about which Bible-believing people disagree. No matter which side of the issue

we are on, we must acknowledge that God did the creating. Whether it was a period of time or a 24-hour day, God in His grace made it happen by His sovereign choice. Those who believe in the 24-hour day argue that we should interpret the Bible by its most literal meaning. A day as most of us understand it is 24 hours. Some who argue for the days being passages of time say that these periods of time consisted of both a morning and evening, but on the seventh day we are not told how long it lasted. Only the morning is mentioned, and no evening is mentioned for the seventh day. This gives credence to those who believe that the days were obviously portions of time, and the seventh period of time is not yet completed.

I personally believe in a 24-hour day, but I do not malign those who think otherwise. Genesis in the first two chapters makes it clear that God did it: it was God who planned it, executed it, and then looked on all that He had created and said, "It is good." Now a discussion of this magnitude cannot be adequately covered in a single column,

but hopefully this can encourage you to study the Bible as God would have us do. The first two chapters of Genesis offer us much for study and prayerful discussion.



In 2 Chronicles we read of the glory of the Lord that filled the temple. What does

that mean?



The glory of the Lord consists of all God's attributes and perfections taken together at once: His eternality, faithfulness, foreknowledge, goodness, and holiness. God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere present. His perfections also include His immutability! God is infinite, inscrutable, and righteous. His glory includes His all-sufficiency, His self-existence, mercy, and love, among many others.

When we speak of His glory, words are used that relate to our seeing His glory, which include light, smoke, and a cloud. In Exodus 33 Moses asked God to show him His glory. God replied, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Ex. 33:19). The glory of God cannot but produce reverential fear and awe in those who experience it in their lives.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

Q I read in my quiet time about Elisha who cursed a group of kids who were making fun of his baldness. Wasn't this an overkill for the prophet? Was the crime really worthy of that punishment?

A The truth is that Elisha didn't curse them because they were making fun of him personally—it was because they were ridiculing the holy calling of prophet. Elisha was not simply taking a vengeance on their pranks and name-calling. He was a man of God and could take any amount of name-calling they could dish out. But he did take offense that they would challenge a servant responsible for sharing God's Word with His people. These youth were not attacking him; they were abusing the spokesman for Jehovah God.

Q When we pray, is it necessary to bow on our knees to do it?

A If you read the Bible from cover to cover you'll discover many different positions that prayer warriors have used to approach God. Some are praying as they sit, while others practice prayer by standing on their feet. One of the most popular postures is standing with arms raised before the Lord. When it comes to your position in praying, God does not prefer one over the other, but He does care about your heart and where it is before Him.

Q What does it mean that Jesus was the "only begotten" Son of God? That makes it sound like there was a time when He did not exist.

A If God is the Eternal Father—and the Bible says He is—it means that by definition the Son of the eternal Father must also be eternal. Nowhere does the Bible articulate that there was a God and His Name is God, and then later at a point of time, His Son Jesus came into being. When God needed a Savior for sinful men, He "gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes on him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The term "only begotten" that was used in older versions of the Bible refers to the fact that Jesus was the one and only Son of the Father.

There is a point when the eternal Son became incarnated in human flesh and was sent from the Father to be the Savior of the world. After Jesus laid down His life on the cross, God the Father raised His one and only, eternal Son from the dead. Now we can have a relationship with God and fellowship with Him through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son. This means that we too can now live eternally because we believe in the eternal Son and have a restored relationship with the eternal Father. This is the basis for our hope as Christians.

God Saves Us: Faithful in Days of Trouble

An Australian man experienced tragedy when a boat accident killed one member of his party and left another missing. But his troubles weren't over. The 49-year-old was treading water for nearly 20 hours when a hammerhead shark spotted him and began circling. Finally, when the situation could not have gotten any more desperate, he was spotted by a rescue boat and pulled to safety.

In this psalm, David speaks of times of intense trouble. When we cannot turn to anyone else for help, we can be certain that our faithful God will rescue us. David's foes were real. Politically, he had enemies who sought to destroy his life and to conquer the nation. The psalm begins with a question, and the answer will cast away fear. If the Lord is on our side, whom shall we fear?

For in the day of
trouble he will keep
me safe in
his dwelling.

Psalm 27:5

David makes it clear that if we seek God, we will be kept safe (v. 5). God has promised to hide us, to shelter us, and to crush our enemies. This is cause for great joy! We have been rescued by the Almighty God and promised a place of honor and safety, even when it may seem that hope is lost.

This confidence in God should inspire us to follow Him closely. We should want to dwell in His house and to gaze on His face (v. 4). If we stay on a path following the Lord, we will be led in a straight direction. No matter what "malicious" lies

are told about us, we can remain confident (v. 12).

What are we confident about? We know our future. We know the God whom we serve. We know that He is coming again, and that in the meantime He will keep us safe.

Apply the Word

When David thought about the confidence he had in God, it cast away fear. Consider the fears you hold in your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to take those away and to restore your confidence in His protection. Rejoice in the fact that God has the power and presence to save you. He will rescue you in your time of need, no matter how fierce the enemy.

Pray with Us

Elizabeth Brown, vice president and general counsel, appreciates your prayers today for the outreach of Moody's ministries. Pray that Moody would continue its legacy of legal integrity in all aspects of our ministries.

God Forgives Us: Faithful Despite Our Sins

Author C. S. Lewis said, “To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” One of the key components of Christianity is forgiveness. We are commanded to forgive others—not because we want to, but because God has forgiven us. It is not based on feeling but on principle.

This letter written to early believers, lays out basic principles of who God is and who we are to be as His followers. John writes with great authority. He knew the person of Jesus Christ and His life, death, and resurrection. This gives him confidence to declare what he believes. John explains that Christians are not to be an exclusive club but rather a fellowship that welcomes others who share their conviction that Jesus Christ is God. When others join the cause, they should make “our joy complete” (v. 4).

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

The first part of the passage focuses on God’s character. He is light, not darkness. In fact, God is pure light. There is not one speck of darkness or deceit in God. He is completely trustworthy and reliable. As we have seen in previous passages, God is distinguished by truthfulness. We can confidently place our lives within His.

In fact, John says, when we place our confidence in God, He purifies us. Unlike God, we cannot claim to be without sin or darkness (v. 8). Humanity is essentially sinful. We do not naturally walk in the light. God has been faithful, however, despite who we are, to forgive us (v. 9). It is important here that we are to acknowledge that we are, by our very nature, sinners. We cannot deny it. But we can rejoice in the fact that God, in His perfection, has completely forgiven us.

Apply the Word

What sin consistently traps you? Perhaps it is gossip or worry or anger. Whatever your struggle, you are loved and forgiven. God has promised that we can go to Him, no matter what we have done, to ask and claim His forgiveness. He is not unaware of what we do, but the sacrificial blood of Jesus has purified us. Claim this forgiveness and thank Him today.

Pray with Us

Moody’s Legal department—Emmy Koh, Cassandra Blakely, Amyra Rodriguez, and Max Clayton—serve our ministries with their expertise in the matters of the law. This team on Moody’s Chicago campus will be grateful for your prayers today.

God Hears Us: Faithful to Listen

"Can you hear me now?" was the advertising tag line for a cellular phone company. A man would be standing on the top of a remote mountain or down in a crowded city subway station holding his phone. He would ask, "Can you hear me now?" to demonstrate that no matter where you went, their phone service could be trusted.

Today's passage says that no matter where we go, physically or emotionally, God can hear us. David wrote many of the psalms as his prayers to God. Psalm 61 is a plea for God to listen. The king realized that despite his esteemed position, he needed God's guidance. Alone, he had made grave mistakes. He desperately longed for God's forgiveness and guidance.

Many of the psalms contain heartfelt pleading with God. This one begins, "Hear my cry, O God" (v. 1). David does

not phrase this as a question. He is certain that God will and does hear. The Lord has guided the king in the past and has been with him in difficult circumstances. God *can* hear us from the very "ends of the earth" (v. 2). There is no place we go where God cannot hear us.

Hear my cry,
O God; listen to my
prayer.

Psalm 61:1

In addition, we can be certain that God will answer. He not only receives our prayers and thoughts, He is faithful to answer and to provide for us a place of safety and "refuge" (v. 3). The imagery in this psalm is beautiful, especially for those who know the ex-

perience of praying long and hard. God is seen as a strong tower and as a bird cloaking us under its mighty wings. We are sheltered by His love and protection.

God is faithful to hear. He is faithful to protect us. He is faithful all the days of our life.

Apply the Word

Some people keep a prayer jar. They write prayers on slips of paper and place them in the container. They know the jar does not hold any powers; rather, it symbolizes taking the worry out of our hands and minds and placing it safely with God. What are your concerns? Like David, place them in the hands of God. He is your place of refuge.

Pray with Us

Your prayers will be an encouragement for Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, as he asks for God's guidance and wisdom in leading the Moody education branch and all the staff involved in this ministry.

God Hears Us: He Hears the Prayers of His Children

Researchers have found that the average person talks at a rate of about 150 words a minute. We can listen, however, to 450 words per minute. Despite this ability, it is difficult to remember everything we hear. When watching the evening news, viewers could recall only about 17 percent of the content, and never exceeded 25 percent.

Is it any wonder then that we sometimes wonder if God actually listens to our prayers?

This letter of 1 John was written to believers who were wavering in their beliefs. They were being swayed by the Gnostic beliefs of their time that cast doubts on the Incarnation.

The main portion of chapter 5 and our passage today emphasizes what believers must “know.” Knowing truths about God gives us confidence. God’s children can rest assured that He can and will hear our prayers.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

1 John 5:14

If we believe in Jesus, we are declared a child of God. This adoption into God’s family is demonstrated by our actions. If we love God, we will love God’s other children as well. We will also keep His commandments. This belief in God is powerful and overcomes any challenges present in the world.

We also must believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ as God’s only Son. In our society, many reduce Jesus to simply a really nice guy who lived a long time ago. Not true, says John. He reminds believers of the evidence of Christ’s deity. God Himself has declared Jesus Christ as His only and beloved Son.

It is because of these things that we can confidently approach God in prayer. We do not need to fear Him. We can come to Him openly knowing that He will listen to our requests.

Apply the Word

It is easy to get swayed by those who present alternate ideas about God. Christians must be careful to weigh these against the truth found only in God’s Word. John’s letters are helpful in restoring a correct image of who Jesus is and how to know we are God’s children. Approach the throne of grace with confidence today, knowing that you are a child of the Almighty God.

Pray with Us

Please pray for the Residence Life staff on the Chicago campus. Neal Anderson, Rachel Monfette, and Bruce Norquist will be grateful for your prayer support as they guide our undergraduate students’ spiritual growth outside of classrooms.

God Protects Us: He Is Our Shelter from Trouble

When a tornado swept through a small Oklahoma city last spring, twenty-four people sought shelter in the Tinker Federal Credit Union's bank vault. When the storm finally stopped and the people emerged safely from their hiding place, they found that the vault was the only part of the 6,000-square-foot building left standing.

In times of trouble, believers should rest in the fact that God is their ultimate source of safety and shelter. He is faithful and has promised to protect us.

Notice the many words in this beautiful psalm that speak of God's ability to safeguard the lives of His children even when trouble seems overwhelming. The text uses words like "shelter," "shadow," "wings," and "refuge" to remind us that our place of safety in this world is near our God.

When we go to Him for help, He is certain to provide safety from whatever

danger befalls us. He promises to safeguard not just our physical lives but also our emotional cries of danger and distress. When we go to Him as our source of help, He will eliminate our fears (v. 5). Even in the face of grave danger, we will experience an overwhelming sense of peace (vv. 7–8).

His faithfulness
will be your shield
and rampart.

Psalm 91:4

The reason that children of God can be peaceful during the storms of life comes from the knowledge that God is ultimately in control and can face any opposition. God will punish the wicked. He sees everything and

carries out perfect justice. Our fears subside when we dwell on His righteous and powerful character. We are given assurance that His angels are watching us (v. 11).

Why does God protect us? Because He loves us and we love Him (v. 14). When we acknowledge God as our own, He has promised to be our protector.

Apply the Word

Storms can be frightening to us—particularly the storms of our life. If you are going through a difficult time right now, know that you can count on the faithfulness of God to hear your prayers and to answer. He has promised His protection to you as His child. You are beloved by Him. He will not leave you.

Pray with Us

Again, keeping the Residence Life staff in our prayers, we'd like to thank those who serve in students' dorms. Please add these residence supervisors to your prayer list: Min Choi, Jill Doyle, Sarah Youssef, and David Chizum.

God Protects Us: He Is Our Hero

Superman was originally introduced in a serial comic book in 1938. The story told of a boy from another planet, Krypton, who landed on earth and soon discovered that he possessed supernatural powers. The hero, inspired by characters like Samson and Hercules, had incredible strength and could leap great distances. When the comic was animated, however, they decided the hero should fly, as leaping looked a bit ridiculous. Although Superman was a force for good, he was not completely indestructible. He could be destroyed by kryptonite.

Our passage for today portrays God as someone with incredible power and strength. He reduces fortified cities to mere rubble (v. 2). The world acknowledges the incredible power of the Almighty. The fearful reaction of the wicked toward God is contrasted with the behavior God shows toward His children. For those who believe in God, He is a source of

incredible comfort and blessing.

God has prepared a banquet—an extravagant feast—for those who love Him (v. 6). This demonstrates how God goes above and beyond our expectations. He demonstrates “perfect faithfulness” toward His children, and carries out a plan for our lives that He has planned for us from long before we could have possibly devised it for ourselves.

In perfect
faithfulness
you have done
marvelous things,
things planned
long ago.

Isaiah 25: 1

The closing verses of the chapter acknowledge the pain of living on this earth. We know the ache of death and the tears of suffering. God has promised that these will one day be eliminated. But the same God that can be trusted by His people should be greatly feared by His enemies. God will triumph over evil. His enemies will be destroyed. He does not have a hidden weakness that will allow His destruction. He is the ultimate conqueror and our trusted hero.

Apply the Word

Sometimes we feel that we are fighting battles each day, whether it's a challenging workplace or a difficult family member or even our own besetting sins. Remember that you have a hero on your side. He has promised to avenge evil and protect you from danger. He sees the future and has a plan for your life that He is capable of fulfilling. Thank God for His love and protection today.

Pray with Us

Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, coordinates the work of Moody's departments—for all our ministries to serve Christ more effectively. He will appreciate your prayers for wisdom in providing business leadership at Moody—for His kingdom!

God Conquers Evil: He Will Triumph

In classic westerns the hero was often played by stars like John Wayne. The good guy always wore a white hat and arrived just in time to save the day. No matter how desperate the situation, viewers knew their hero would triumph. Despite their bravado, they were merely human. Wayne once said, “Courage is being scared to death . . . and saddling up anyway.”

Today in our passage we skip to the end of humanity’s story, that glorious moment when God returns to judge the living and the dead. This is the critical moment in history, when good will ultimately triumph. Jesus, the Son of God and the Word, is pictured riding in on a white horse (vv. 11–13; cf. John 1). He is called “Faithful and True.” God is present to the very end. He was at the Beginning and will be at the End, closing the story in the way that He intended.

I saw heaven
standing open and
there before me
was a white horse,
whose rider is
called Faithful
and True.

Revelation 19: 11

The start of chapter 19 depicts heaven’s reaction to the fall of Babylon and victory over evil. A great “roar” is heard with people shouting “Hallelujah!” in praise to God (v. 1). They recognize He has avenged evil and is declaring His power, and they rejoice.

It is a noisy scene, with triumphant sounds of victory. Those who have been victimized can rejoice that God is in control and that He will make right all the wrongs that have been done to them. The angels are present as well, but they direct our attention to Jesus. His description would terrify any

villain: eyes like “blazing fire” and a robe “dripped in blood” (vv. 12, 13).

This is not human bravado, but the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (v. 16). He will declare victory once and for all over evil.

Apply the Word

How do you picture God? Do you see Him as the baby Jesus, still in His mother’s arms? Or, perhaps you see Him as the sacrificial Savior on the cross. Here in Revelation, we see God as the victor. The portrait might seem terrifying until you realize that He is on our side. He has promised and is faithful to save us.

Pray with Us

Rhonda AuYeung, Julia Baad, Joshua Grudziecki, Larry Bohlin, and Mollie Bond help represent our ministries outside of Moody through their work in Marketing and Communications. May God bless their gifts of creativity and communication for His glory.

Created to Be Faithful: Created for Faithfulness

The second verse of the hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” speaks of the dependable patterns of nature. “Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, / Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above, / Join with all nature in manifold witness / To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.”

The hymn writer notes the rhythm of God’s creation. Each season, each day, follows a regular pattern. When we wake up in the morning, we can be certain that the sun will rise.

By looking at this example from nature, we know that we can depend on the Creator. In this psalm, God addresses His servant David. David was chosen by God to be the king of Israel. This unknown young man was handpicked instead of many more likely candidates to lead God’s people. What an honor it must have been to be chosen by God for such a mission.

We would like to think that David, realizing the depth of God’s faith in him,

would be perfectly honest, faithful, and obedient. That wasn’t the case. David broke his promises. He sinned against God, his people, and his neighbor. But despite these failures, God did not go back on His covenant with David and with the nation of Israel.

I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.

Psalm 89:33

This psalm describes the relationship between David and God. God promises to love David “forever” and desires, in return, David’s faithfulness. This may seem a daunting task, knowing our tendency to fail. But the remarkable thing about God is that even when we

disobey and God disciplines us, our acts will not reduce God’s faithfulness. A promise from God can be counted on completely.

The psalm compares the everlasting faithfulness of God to nature. Just like the moon and sun appear each day in the sky, God will forever be faithful to His covenant promises.

Apply the Word

God’s faithfulness indicates that He is a personal God who desires a relationship with us. He created, redeemed, and sustained us to be in fellowship with Him. If you think that you’ve done something too bad for God to love you, remember the story of David. Our sin is not strong enough to overcome God’s love. Confess, accept His forgiveness, and be restored.

Pray with Us

Today, please continue to pray for our Marketing and Communications employees—Lynn Gabalec, Rachel Hutcheson, Elena Mafter, Linda Piepenbrink, and Brian Regnerus. Pray they always do their best to represent the mission and vision of Moody.

Called to Be Faithful: Fix Our Thoughts on Jesus

When slaves were escaping from the American South, they would use clues to help them head in the right direction. Often their final goal was Canada, where slavery was not permitted and they could at last find freedom. To figure out which direction was north they would notice the moss that usually grew on the north side of trees. They would also look at the migratory patterns of birds. But the best clue was the North Star. Unlike other stars it never changed position but always pointed toward their goal.

We are encouraged in our faith by fixing our minds and hearts on Jesus. Hebrews 3 notes that believers have a heavenly calling (v. 1). To keep focused on this goal and avoid being distracted by the world, we are to focus our thinking on Jesus. This passage notes that Moses was faithful to obey God in his task of leading God's people. But Jesus

is the greatest example of faithfulness, surpassing even Moses. He was even obedient in death (see Phil. 2:5-8). We have these examples of living a holy life that is faithful to our calling.

We also have examples in Scripture of disobedience. The Israelites, during their years wandering in the wilderness, were examples of rebellion. They hardened their hearts, lost their focus, and resorted to grumbling and disobedience. Their inability to enter the Promised Land should serve as a reminder to us to keep our eyes focused on Jesus rather than our earthly circumstances.

Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus.

Hebrews 3:1

We are to encourage one another in the journey, to live with our eyes on the example of our Lord and Savior to direct our lives. It means holding "firmly" (v. 14) to what we have been taught and remaining faithful to the very end.

Apply the Word

How can we fix our eyes on Jesus? One way is through memorizing His Word, keeping it close to our hearts and minds. Another way is to listen to songs of praise that focus our spirit on His character. And we can also develop the habit of conversational prayer, talking to the Lord throughout the day in every situation. These will help point us in the direction of faithfulness to Him.

Pray with Us

Give thanks for the growing ministry of Moody Theological Seminary on two campuses in Chicago, IL and Plymouth, MI. Also, please give your prayer support to the faculty and administration headed by VP and dean of MTS, Dr. John Jelinek.

Faithful to the End: Keeping His Covenant of Love

Old Faithful, a geyser in the Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, is the most predictable geographical feature on earth. Given its name in 1870 by a group of explorers, the geyser erupts every 35 to 120 minutes, shooting boiling water up to 185 feet in the air. While it isn't the biggest or highest geyser in the park, it is the most predictable. Tourists still travel to see "Old Faithful" erupt in the same spectacular way since the earliest days of the park.

As the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, they had to learn to depend on the spectacular and faithful appearances of God. He had appeared to them as a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud. He had proven His existence through plagues and serpents. Now at this moment, God told Israel they must drive out their enemies when they entered the land. They were to destroy the people completely, leaving nothing behind.

He is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations.

Deuteronomy 7:9

God demanded the complete obedience of the Israelites for their own good and for His glory. He did not want the idolatry of these nations to infiltrate and weaken His people. He wanted their complete allegiance.

God reminded His people of the faithfulness He had demonstrated to them. He did not choose them because they were great in number, but simply because He loved them (v. 8). He promised faithfulness to the people of Israel, and He had never let them down.

His covenant of love toward His people had already been kept for generations, and will be kept until the end. Because of this, we are to keep His commandments (v. 11). God's faithfulness, His regular appearance in the lives of His people, demands faithfulness in return. These acts of obedience will result in blessing.

Apply the Word

Thank God today for His faithfulness to all generations. Praise Him for the way He has been faithful to the generations before you, and for how He has proven His faithfulness in your own life. Pray that you will be strengthened to obey His commands and remain faithful to the One who has demonstrated His love toward you in so many ways.

Pray with Us

Today, would you uphold in prayer the staff of Moody Theological Seminary in Plymouth-MI? You can encourage Brian Mollenkamp, Micah Jelinek, and professors Raju Kunjummen and Eugene Mayhew in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Faithful to the End: Confidence in What We Hope For

Noah was about 500 years old when God told him to build an ark. We must remember that he lived in an area that did not require transportation by ship. There was no reasonable explanation that this elderly man could give his neighbors as to why he was building an enormous vessel on dry land. But Noah steadfastly ignored ridicule and faithfully obeyed God's precise instructions. He built the vessel to specifications, using exact measurements and gopher wood. The boat, which others mocked, was a symbol of his obedience and faith in God. It also became his salvation when a flood covered the earth.

This chapter of Hebrews offers a beautiful explanation on what it means to be faithful. Today's verse defines faith as the "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (v. 1). When we move forward

with trust even while not seeing evidence that our decision is a good one, that is faith. Noah exhibited this type of faith when he built the ark and followed God's command. The examples of Abraham and Sarah also illustrate the point. Abraham moved his family to a foreign country. Sarah bore a child in her later years. They trusted God and moved forward in faith.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for.

Hebrews 11:1

This type of faith pleases God (v. 6). We are called to love Him and to obey Him even when we cannot see Him. In this, we are told, is great reward. These actions may seem illogical and ridiculous to others. In fact, God has not promised that we will always understand His plan for us. We are to have confidence in what we cannot and even may not ever see. We are "longing for a better country" (v. 16), and this belief will be demonstrated in the way we live in this one.

Apply the Word

Our culture thinks that some of our faithful choices are ridiculous. Give up a day of the weekend to meet with other people to praise God? Choose not to indulge in some kinds of entertainment because it won't edify or encourage us to follow Christ? Remain faithful to our commitments to our spouse? Yet we can bring glory to God by remaining faithful to Him, even if our neighbors think we're silly.

Pray with Us

Again, bring before the Lord these professors at MTS-MI: Eric Moore, John Restum, and Brian Tucker. Pray for power and effectiveness in teaching the truth of God's Word to their students.

Faithful to the End: Faithful in the Hard Things

Long-distance runners feel burning muscles, aching joints, and cardiovascular exhaustion. Marathon runner Matt Gabrielson was on mile 18 of the New York City Marathon when he felt an intense pounding in his quadriceps. Rather than give up, his solution was to refocus. He studied the faces of the people cheering on the sidelines. By focusing on the pleasure of the crowd instead of on his pain, he was able to finish the race.

This second half of Hebrews 11 continues to list individuals whose lives were distinguished by faith.

But it takes the idea of faithfulness a step further by including the names of those who faced unimaginable decisions or circumstances. What must Abraham have felt when faced with the instruction to sacrifice his son Isaac? Moses' parents hid their child in a basket to prevent his murder and as a mark of hope for his future. Moses grew up to make his own

difficult choices: to defy Pharaoh and to lead God's people out of slavery.

Others are mentioned by name as well, and their stories bear repeating: Rahab, Gideon, Samson, and Samuel. These men and women were imprisoned, tortured, jeered, and even stoned. For these individuals who obeyed God

no matter how great the cost, it was said, "the world was not worthy of them" (v. 38).

Even though God commended each of these people for their faith, their reward was not on this

earth. They knew that God had something far better for them. They kept their eyes on eternity. Being faithful to God in this life requires keeping our focus not on ourselves but on Him and remembering the faithfulness of those who have run the race before us. They are surrounding us, cheering for us to continue to be faithful to God.

Let us run with
perseverance the
race marked out
for us.

Hebrews 12:1

Apply the Word

Because we believe that Jesus' death and resurrection have made eternal life with God possible, the communion of believers includes those who have preceded us in death. They are worshiping now in heaven even while we are worshiping God on earth. If you have a loved one who has passed away, thank God for that inspiring life and example that continues to encourage you.

Pray with Us

Dr. James Spencer, VP and dean of Moody Distance Learning, requests your prayers for the continued growth of MDL's programs and courses. With online, independent study, modular, and extension site options, a Moody education becomes available to more and more people.

Faithful to the End: Faithful as We Wait

A video circulating on the Internet showed a huge black Labrador whose owner, a soldier, had just returned from an extended term of service. The animal could not stop leaping on his master, wagging his tail, and crying in small barks of joy. Finally, the man made it to an easy chair where the animal jumped on top of him, crying dog tears because the man he had waited so patiently for had at last returned.

In today's passage, the apostle Paul writes to the church at Corinth. The letter specifically addresses them in verse 2 along with "all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Together we are followers of Jesus Christ, and we should be people who are longing for His return. Paul expresses his thankfulness for this community of believers (v. 4).

He will also keep
you firm to the end.

1 Corinthians 1:8

Paul is reminding the church that they are to remain faithful as they "eagerly wait" for Christ's return (v. 7). Our behavior should be influenced by our desire to please God, because we know that we will see Him soon. Paul mentions the use of our spiritual gifts in verse 7. These God-given gifts are evidence of the faith within us and of our relationship with Him. We are not to sit aimlessly waiting for Christ's return, but rather we should be serving Him with the abilities He has given us.

We are to remain faithful. Notice the dynamic here: while we are remaining faithful, God is keeping us "firm" in our faith so we do not stumble and sin. The wait may seem long as we serve God in this fallen world, but He has promised us His Holy Spirit to guide us and keep us "blameless" to the end (v. 8).

Apply the Word

Faithfulness is a characteristic that pleases God. How can we show our faithfulness to Him? Paul suggests here that when we serve God with our spiritual gifts, we are following Him well. What are the gifts God has given you? Are you using them to serve Him? If not, can you find a way to exercise those abilities as you wait for His return?

Pray with Us

Would you add to your prayers the administration staff of Moody Aviation: Cecil Bedford, Allison Pfening, and Jody Appleby? We are thankful for their faithful service in Spokane, WA.

Faithful to Transform Us: God Forgives Our Unfaithfulness

John Fisher, in an article for *Contemporary Christian Music*, wrote about the Christian's struggle with sin: "There is something terribly right about . . . realizing that our struggle with sin is in many ways similar to an alcoholic's struggle with drinking. It's never over. How often I find myself talking about sin in the past tense as if being a sinner is something I'm beyond—a page turned in the book of my life. But sin is like alcoholism. Sinners are never cured; they simply decide to stop sinning . . . and it's a daily decision."

It is tempting to think that, as redeemed children of the Holy God, we will never sin again. We determine to be faithful and to obey God's commands, yet we find ourselves stumbling and struggling on a daily basis. Romans 3 addresses this problem of sinfulness and contrasts it with the faithfulness of God. Paul asks, "[Does our] unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness?" (v. 3). The answer is emphatic:

Will their
unfaithfulness
nullify God's
faithfulness?
Not at all!

Romans 3:3–4

"Not at all!" (v. 4). He explains that when we look at our own unrighteousness, it makes God's righteousness appear even more clearly.

We can see how pure and righteous and holy God is by examining the tendency toward sinfulness in our own hearts. The

next verses give a basic theology of human sinfulness. Despite what some would like to believe, human beings are innately sinful. It is impossible to find anyone who does not struggle with sinfulness. "There is no one righteous, not even one" (v. 10). Paul's evaluation of

the human condition leaves little room for exceptions.

This human predisposition for sin provides the perfect platform for God to forgive and redeem us. We are daily dependent on Him to transform our lives and to keep us faithful. We are sinful people in need of a Savior.

Apply the Word

When you are talking to an unbeliever, try talking about sin. Do they believe that people are generally good or evil? Do they believe that they are without sin? Recognizing our sinfulness is a key part of the gospel message. Without identifying our sinfulness, we do not recognize our need for a Savior. We must accept the truth of our sin before we can believe the good news of salvation.

Pray with Us

Jim Elliott, VP of Stewardship, thanks our donors for partnering with us prayerfully and financially and invites you to pray for continued partnership in the New Year. We value our donors' support and the lasting relationships we establish with them.

Faithful to Transform Us: God Justifies Us by Faith

In the popular television show *Extreme Weight Loss*, people who have struggled for a lifetime with obesity determine to shed the pounds. They are paired with a trainer who gives them rules to follow. Over and over again, the contestants fail to follow the rules, and the scale ruthlessly reveals the measure of their success. Frequently the contestants weep as they describe their struggle to change lifelong habits in order to comply with the trainer's discipline.

As we continue to read this passage in Romans, we see Paul describe the perceived conflict between fulfilling the Law and walking in faith. He reminds believers in verse 20 that we are not declared righteous by fulfilling each detail of the Law. In fact, the Law highlights our sinful nature because it is impossible for any of us to keep the Law.

A person is justified
by faith apart from
the works of the
law.

Romans 3:28

The “good” news is that this Law does not play favorites; it disqualifies everyone. It does not matter if you are born Jewish or Gentile. It does not matter if you come from a religious family or an atheist one. We have *all* fallen short of God's ideal. Our sinfulness stands in stark contrast to the righteousness of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Our redemption does not come through great effort on our part but was completed by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the shedding of His blood (v. 25). That perfect sacrifice paid for all of our sins. Our debt, tremendous as it was, has been forgiven.

Such news should elicit a response of great faith. We do not boast that we accomplished this on our own. We boast in the One in whom we believe. By placing our faith completely in Him, we are transformed.

Apply the Word

Do you get discouraged by your inability to follow God's commands perfectly? The key is to look at the end goal, in faith, and not to focus on your failures. We have also been given a “personal trainer” in the Holy Spirit. Pray that God will enable you to hear His guiding voice, to walk in faith. Remember that our relationship with God depends on Christ's work, not our perfection.

Pray with Us

Health Service personnel, Ann Meyer and Catherine Cates, help students and employees in time of need with their medical expertise. Would you include them in your prayers today?

Faithful to Complete Us: We Are His Masterpiece

Legend has it that Pablo Picasso was sitting in a Paris café when a bold woman approached him and asked the artist to draw her portrait. Picasso agreed. Studying her for a moment, he proceeded to create her image with a single pencil stroke. He handed the woman the finished piece of art. “It’s perfect!” exclaimed the woman. “What do I owe you?” Picasso responded, “Five thousand dollars.” The woman was incredulous: “How can you charge so much for a few seconds of work?” Picasso replied, “Madame, it took me my entire life.”

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.

Ephesians 2:10

As believers, we are God’s masterpiece. We are His creation and the result of a lifetime of work. This is no easy task. We have learned, in Paul’s letter to the Romans that we are inherently sinful and cannot fulfill God’s Law on our own. Here, we learn that although we are deserving of punishment, we are saved by God’s “great love for

us” (v. 4). We were transformed in Christ, made alive even while we were still dead in sin.

God does not despair and give up on us as we stumble in our faith. Rather, He lifts us up and seats us “with him in the heavenly realms” (v. 6). We are saved by

God’s grace, not by our works. We cannot boast of this for it is nothing that we have done. We are God’s “handiwork” (v. 10). Other translations describe us as God’s “masterpiece” or “workmanship.” God has perfected us through Christ Jesus. He has a plan

for us that will take a lifetime to complete.

The God who began a good work in us is faithful to complete it. We are nurtured by His love and grace. We have an eternal destiny. We are His most magnificent handiwork.

Apply the Word

We often focus on the parts of ourselves that are weak, faulty, or incomplete. Remember that God sees you in perfection. He knows the plan that He has for your life and has promised to complete it. He loves you completely and values you as His creation. You are His handiwork, His workmanship, His masterpiece. You are incredibly valuable to God.

Pray with Us

The ministry of Moody Radio involves several departments. Today we welcome your prayers for the administrative work of Doug Hastings and Amy Rios. We appreciate everything they do to increase the effectiveness of Moody Radio for the glory of God.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness!

After a lifetime of serving God, evangelist Billy Graham said, "Certainly, one lesson is to remind us of our responsibility to be diligent in our service for God right now. I may not be able to do everything I once did (nor does God expect me to), *but I am called to be faithful to what I can do.*" Reflecting on the value of her own life of service to God, Mother Teresa said, "God has not called me to be successful; *He has called me to be faithful.*"

What motivated Billy Graham and Mother Teresa to serve God sacrificially throughout their lives? Clearly, they both felt called to be faithful servants. God's faithfulness to us should inspire us, in turn, to be faithful to Him and to our heavenly calling. In today's passage, Samuel reflected on a lifetime of service and on the relationship between Israel and the God they were called to follow. He is "old and gray"

(v. 2), and could share his experience with the nation.

He asked if they could find fault against him, and they declared his innocence. He then earned the right to recount for Israel the mighty acts God has performed on their behalf. Clearly, they had been quick

to forget the faithfulness and divine provision of God. Samuel demonstrated his connection with God by calling down thunder and rain as a sign. He warned the nation that they should learn from their mistakes and determine to be faithful. The people were fearful. Would God punish them?

Be sure to fear the
LORD and serve
him faithfully with
all your heart;
consider what great
things he has done
for you.

1 Samuel 12:24

But Samuel insisted the answer is clear: God desires our obedience and our faithful service. He knows that we may turn from Him and His instruction. He is faithful to forgive, and we are called again and again to "serve him faithfully" (v. 24).

Apply the Word

Praise God for His faithfulness, as demonstrated through His creation. Praise God for the way He protects and provides for you. Praise God for His faithful answer to prayer and for His forgiveness. Pray that He will keep you close to your calling, to remain ever mindful of His leading and to follow Him with faithfulness. Great is His faithfulness!

Pray with Us

As we come to the end of this month's study, let's praise God for His faithfulness to all generations. Spend time thanking the Lord today for the sure foundation of His Word that gives us hope and joy in all circumstances.

FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

choices which impact my life today. Today's reading in Today in the Word, [Jesus heals the blind man, echoes my own personal encounter with Jesus]. Mark 8:22-26 tells the story of people bringing a blind man to Jesus for healing. Jesus uses a two-step process to complete the healing. I have asked for prayer many times, which echoes the Scripture passage of asking others to bring me before the Lord for healing. The Lord has chosen to heal my life not through a dramatic show but through a multi-stage process of prayer, reading His Word, Bible studies, experiences, and the people He brought into my life. Through all this the Lord and I have developed a personal relationship. It is as if He is teaching me not to come just for healing, but to search out His company, His companionship. He has sculpted new spiritual eyes to cure my spiritual blindness. Recently, I asked Him for healing from a lot of anxiety I've had. Today, I feel that writing this note, [and not being afraid to tell my story] is a step toward healing my anxiety. As I have written this, I realize I am receiving healing. Now, how cool is that!

Judy, W. Bloomfield, MI:

Before retirement I worked for a company that invested in GPSs. I especially needed one of them because I was consistently lost in the suburbs of Detroit as I made my appointed sales calls. Even with the GPS I often turned the wrong way and after so many "recalculating" shouts from the dashboard of my car, I had the only "talented" contraption that said, "I am re-routing you to the next gas station for directions, I'm tired." Back then I found gas stations to be my most reliable source of directional information. I prefer real-people conver-

sations over machines. I like to look at people when I speak to them.

So does Jesus. Before my love encounter with my Savior, I was content with "siteings" of my Miracle Worker. I could always see Him when I needed a rescue and I thought that was enough. You see, I didn't have to change anything in my life, if "siteings" were enough. But God pursued me with a jealous love and would not let me settle for anything far less than He had planned.

My love encounter happened when [through Scripture reading] I realized I was the Woman at the Well. Oh, Miss "no name," "Miss rejected and torn." "Miss so ashamed of her past" she could barely carry her water jar to Jacob's well. I cried with a godly sorrow that day, as I encountered Christ. And it was that day that He embraced me, wiped away my tears, and "re-calculated" my life. I turned to a changed life. There in my living room with the sun rising, I was convicted of my past, but not condemned, as I came face to face with my Lord. I had to face my past, before I could accept my future.

I think of that particular morning often with thankfulness in my heart which gives me peace beyond understanding. God wanted more than a "siteing," as He met me at my own well to restore me with living water. I am so grateful that I can open my own alabaster box and drop my net to follow Him now. No more "gas station" stops to gain direction in my life; I go to the Source of all knowledge for the answers that keep me focused on this path called life.

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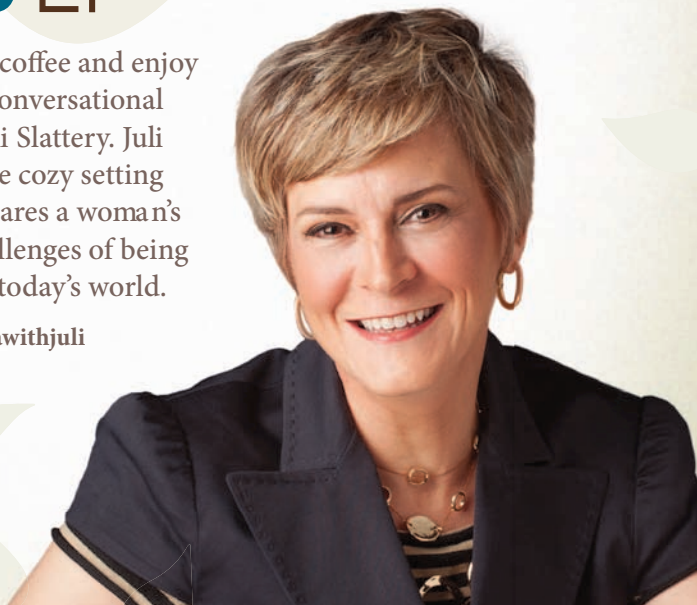
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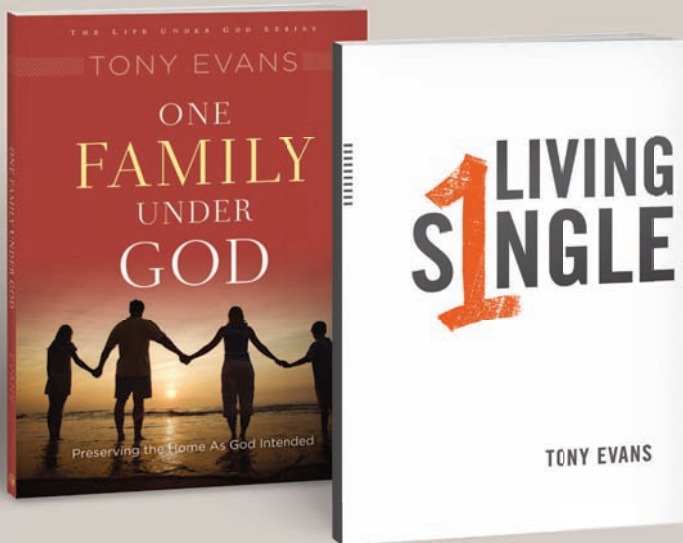
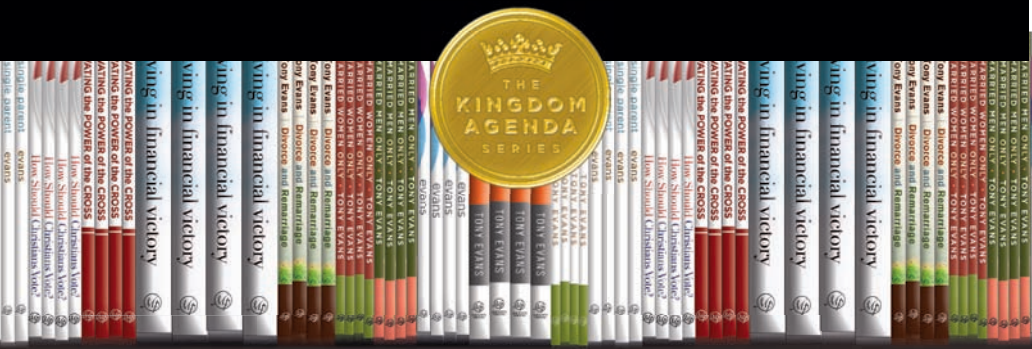
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