

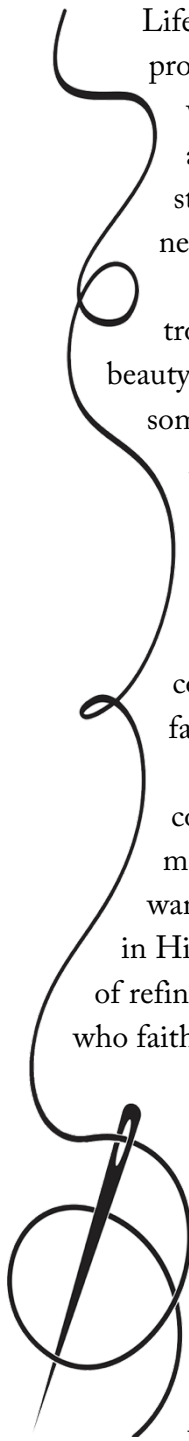
I used to sew. A lot. In the mid-70s, we had a small fabric store in our basement while my uncle's business was being renovated. Later, in high school, I sewed furry dice—a fun family project where everyone helped cut, stuff, and stitch the trendy fad.

By the time my first son was born, I was into quilt making. I loved the creativity, the patterns, and the satisfaction of completing a project. But once the kids started crawling, I put away my sewing supplies. For the most part, they've been retired ever since.

These days, when I do sew, I find I'm a bit lost. It's just not the same without my Singer 66. That machine was like an old friend—I knew its quirks and how to fix them. It only did straight stitches and zigzags, but that's all I needed. Today's machines? They have too many features, and one problem after another seems to arise. If it's not the tension, it's the thread. If not the thread, it's the bobbin. Sometimes I thread it wrong—or maybe it's me.

*Weeping may stay
for the night, but
rejoicing comes in
the morning.*

—Psalm 30:5



Life can feel a lot like that sewing machine, can't it? Tangled problems, unexpected frustrations, and challenges that make you want to give up. Whether it's tension in relationships, loose ends at work, or a knot in your heart you can't seem to undo, life's struggles can feel overwhelming at times. Like trying to thread a needle with shaky hands, some days nothing seems to go right.

But here's the thing: when I get past the new learning curve, troubleshoot a few problems, and stay the course, I discover there's beauty at the end of persistence and patience. So it is with life, sometimes things get harder before they get better. Psalm 30:5 reminds us, "Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."

This verse doesn't deny life's hardships; it acknowledges them. Nights of weeping, frustration, and pain are real. But they won't last forever. God's promises assure us that joy is coming. Like the dawn breaking after a dark night, His faithfulness brings light, renewal, and rejoicing.

In hindsight, I see how God has worked in my life. How He comforted me, how He strengthened me, how He went before me, and how He walked through the fire with me. As much as I wanted instant relief from my sorrow and pain, the resolution came in His way and His time. Those seasons of darkness were God's way of refining, teaching, and preparing me for the joy that comes to those who faithfully trust Him.

If you're in a season of weeping, my friend, remember, it's always darkest just before the dawn. The morning is near and with it comes joy. How do I know that? Because the same God that's been faithful to you in the past will be just as faithful to you in the future. Amen? Hold onto that truth and carry it with you through the darkness.

Remember the times when He turned your mourning into rejoicing, and hold onto those moments of hope. Life may feel uncertain now, but God is at work—creating something

beautiful, even if you can't see it yet. Joy comes in the morning, my friend. Hold on. The dawn is near.

READ AND REFLECT

Read Matthew 14:22-33. How does Jesus' presence during the disciples' darkest hours encourage you to trust Him during your own life's storms?

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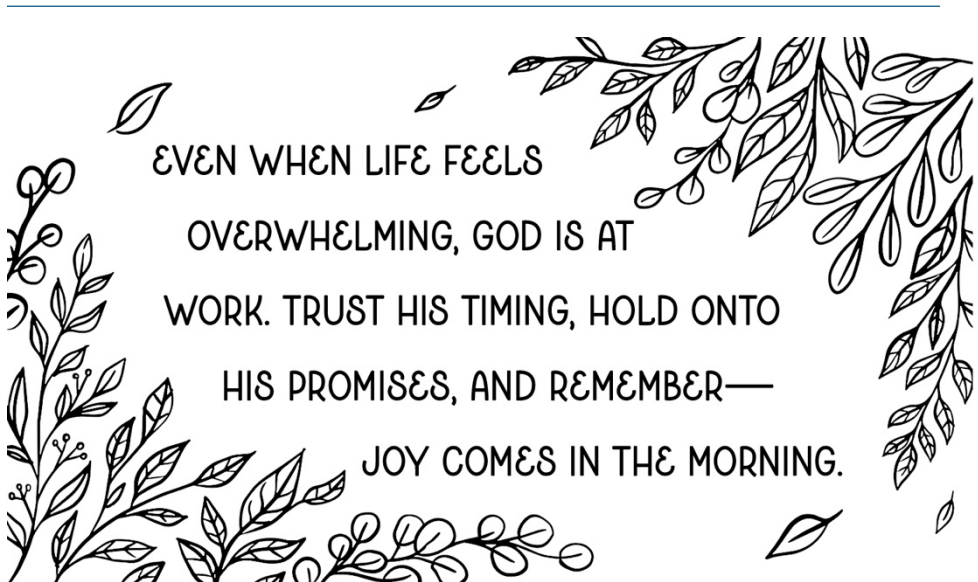
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P.S. As you were reading that story, did you notice what time of day it took place?





WORDS TO GROW BY

If you ever find yourself lost in a sea of uncertainty, about to lose hope, remember this: When the disciples were stuck in the storm, Jesus showed up, walking on water, and reminded them He was in control: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). Just like that, He shows up for us too. Life can feel overwhelming, and the night can feel endless, but morning always comes. Even when we can't see the way forward, He is working behind the scenes, guiding us through. Jesus brings calm in the chaos and hope in the hardest moments, proving that joy is never far behind. Hold on to this truth: no matter how dark it feels in the moment, His faithfulness will bring joy in the morning.

3 WAYS TO CULTIVATE JOY

1. PRACTICE GRATITUDE: KEEP A JOURNAL AND WRITE DOWN THREE BLESSINGS EACH DAY.
2. ENCOURAGE SOMEONE: SEND A KIND NOTE, TEXT, OR SMALL GIFT TO BRIGHTEN SOMEONE'S DAY.
3. REST IN GOD'S PRESENCE: DEDICATE TIME TO QUIETLY SIT WITH HIM AND REFLECT ON HIS LOVE.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Can you recall a time when God turned your sorrow into joy? What happened, and how does His faithfulness in that moment strengthen your trust in Him for the future?

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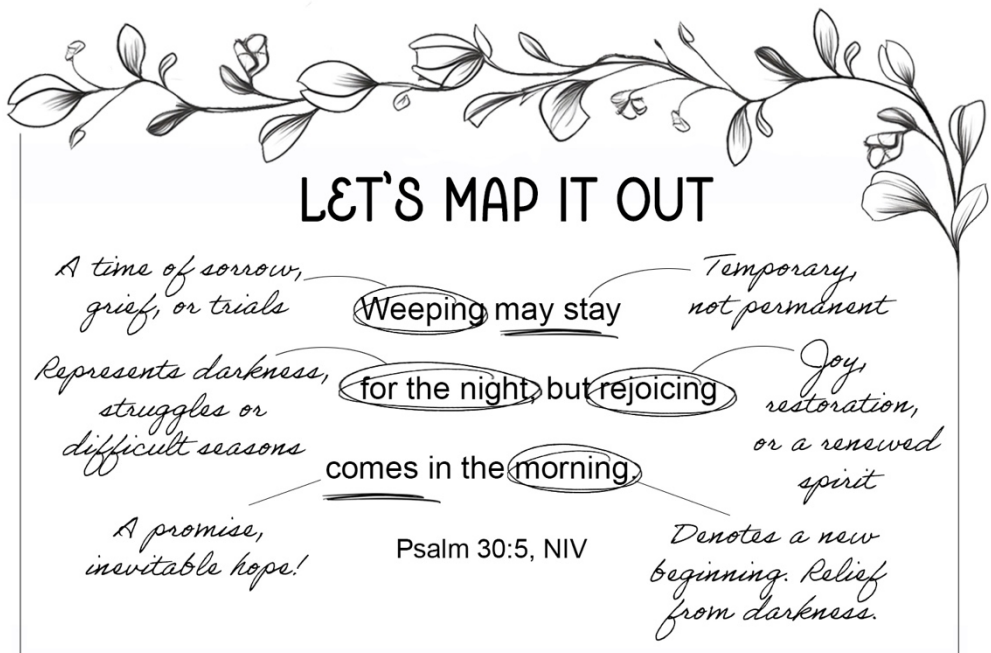
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More Food for Thought...

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.

– Isaiah 35:1-2



Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.'

– Psalm 126:2



Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

– Isaiah 51:3



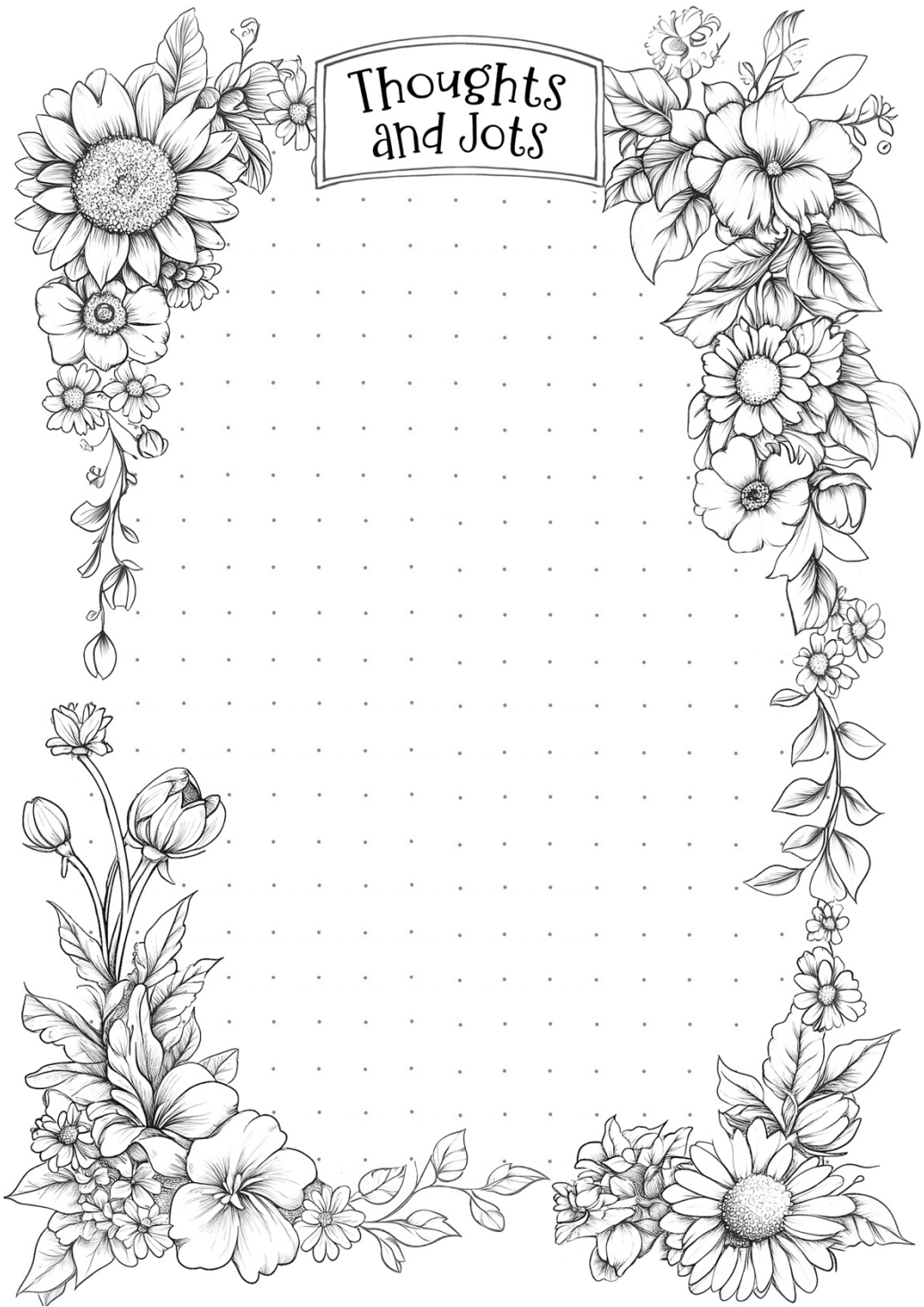
Light shines on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart.

– Psalm 97:11



The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing.

– Proverbs 10:28







One summer, we were out at family Bible camp. I was already a mom by this time, and my parents had joined us for the week. It was one of those beautiful, memory-making trips where you reconnect with family, laugh around campfires, and leave the world behind.

Then we heard about the haunted house.

It was just up the hill and through the trees, they said. My sister and her husband warned us not to go, which, of course, only made my dad and me want to check it out even more. "We're not afraid of an old house," I told them. "Besides, we don't believe in ghosts—other than the Holy Ghost—and He's not about to jump out and scare us!"

And so, the two of us set off on a hike to find this mysterious house.

The closer we got to the hill, the more I began to feel uneasy. The trees seemed darker; the air thicker. What would we find up there? And why were people afraid to go near it?

*Then you will
know the truth,
and the truth will
set you free.*

—John 8:32

Just as I began to wonder if we should turn back, something large rustled in the bushes. A thick, bushy tree began to sway violently. My heart was racing as something big moved toward us.

Whatever it was, I didn't want to stick around to find out. My dad ran, scaling an old wooden fence in record time, yelling as he passed me. I followed, nearly tripping over my own feet. And, just as I was about to leap over the fence, our "monster" emerged from the bushes.

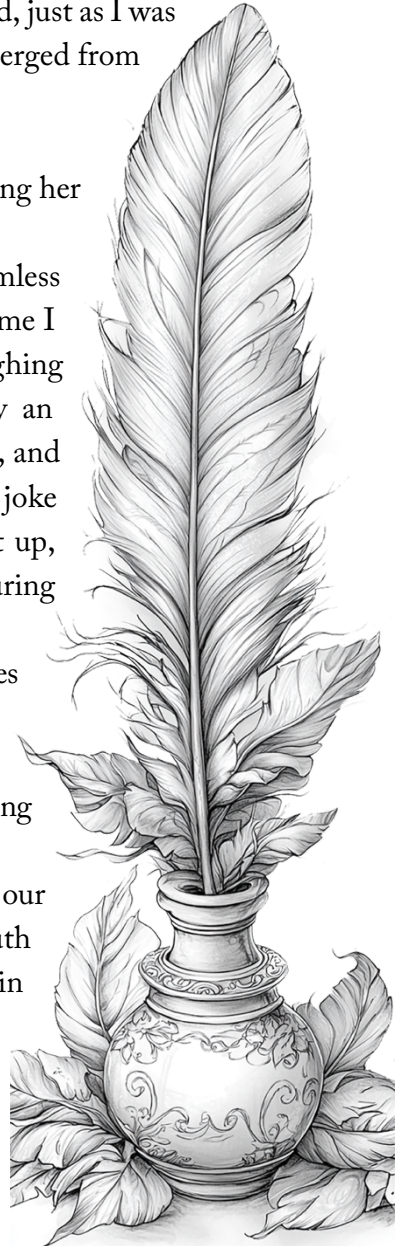
A big, old, white cow.

There it stood, chewing her cud and minding her own business.

I froze for a moment, staring at this harmless animal before bursting into laughter. By the time I caught up to my dad, I was in tears from laughing so hard. Both of us had been scared off by an innocent cow. We laughed until our sides hurt, and for the rest of the week, it became the running joke in our family. Every time someone brought it up, we couldn't help but laugh all over again, picturing my dad screaming while he ran up the hill.

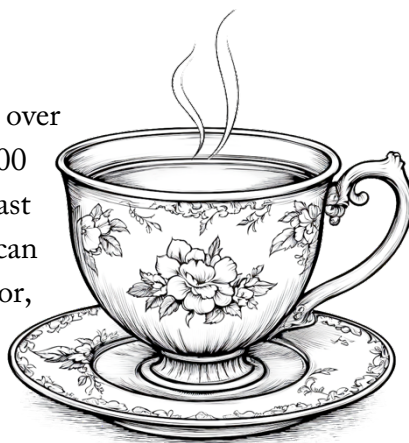
Fear grows in the absence of truth. It thrives on the unknown, exaggerations in our minds, and assumptions that aren't grounded in reality. Fear has a way of consuming our thoughts, robbing us of the joy and peace that God desires for us.

When we allow fear to take root, it distorts our perspective and magnifies our worries. But truth has the power to shrink fear. As Jesus says in John 8:32 (NIV), *"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* Truth brings freedom—not just freedom from sin, but freedom from the grip of fear that keeps us from living a joyfully spirit-filled life.



PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

Did you know that the Bible is filled with over 7,000 promises from God? That's over 7,000 reminders of His faithfulness and steadfast love! By clinging to these promises, we can rest in the assurance that He is our protector, provider, and guide. Truth doesn't just push fear aside—it transforms it. Peace calms our anxiety, and joy replaces even the deepest sorrow. As Psalm 119:165 says, "Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble." If you're not doing it already, find a quiet corner in your home and make Bible study a regular part of your daily routine. Even just a few minutes in God's Word can make a big difference in your day.



LET'S MAP IT OUT

Refers to a deep understanding and personal experience of the truth, not just intellectual knowledge.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Represents Jesus Himself (John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life"), as well as God's Word (John 17:17: "Your word is truth").

Freedom from sin, spiritual bondage, and the lies of the enemy, leading to true liberation in Christ.

John 8:32, NIV

This verse highlights that the truth brings freedom - not just from sin but also from the lies and deception of the world.

Read Psalm 119:41–48. What are some ways the psalmist actively seeks and engages with God's truth?

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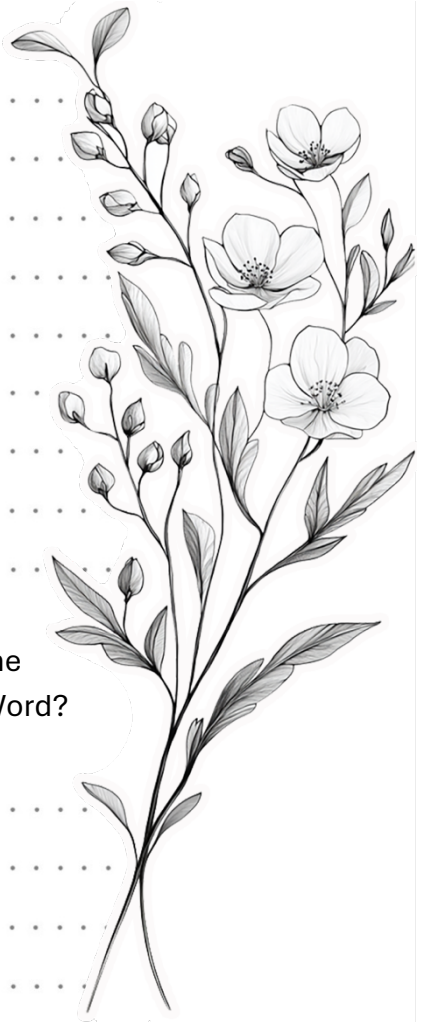
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Read Psalm 119:49-56. What are some ways the psalmist finds comfort and strength in God's Word?

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20 Promises from God That Bring Us Joy

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Highlight these in your Bible!

1. He will never leave us nor forsake us (Deut. 31:6).
2. We are His children (John 1:12).
3. He has plans to prosper us, not harm us (Jeremiah 29:11).
4. His peace surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).
5. He will strengthen us when we are weak (Isaiah 41:10).
6. His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).
7. He is faithful to forgive our sins (1 John 1:9).
8. We have eternal life through Jesus (John 3:16).
9. He hears our prayers (1 John 5:14-15).
10. He works all things for good (Romans 8:28).
11. He is our refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1).
12. He will guide us continually (Isaiah 58:11).
13. He will provide for all our needs (Philippians 4:19).
14. His love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).
15. He renews our strength (Isaiah 40:31).
16. He will fight for us (Exodus 14:14).
17. We are more than conquerors through Him (Romans 8:37).
18. He is with us in every trial (Isaiah 43:2).
19. Nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:39).
20. He gives us fullness of joy in His presence (Psalm 16:11).

More Food for Thought...

Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

– Psalm 119:111



Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord Himself, is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

– Isaiah 12:2-3



Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding.

– Proverbs 3:13



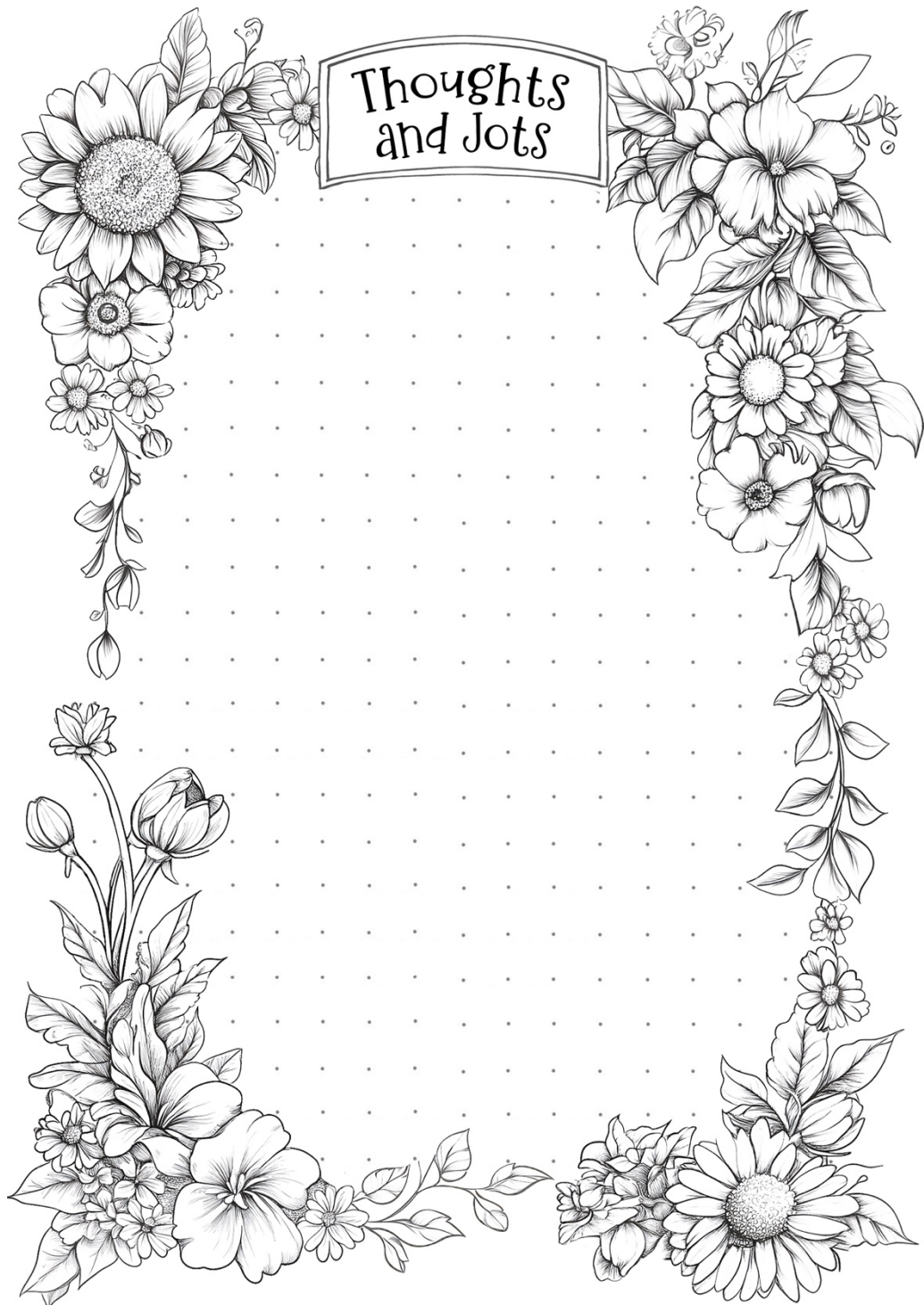
But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom, and continues to do so—not being a forgetful hearer, but an effective doer—he will be blessed in what he does.

–James 1:25

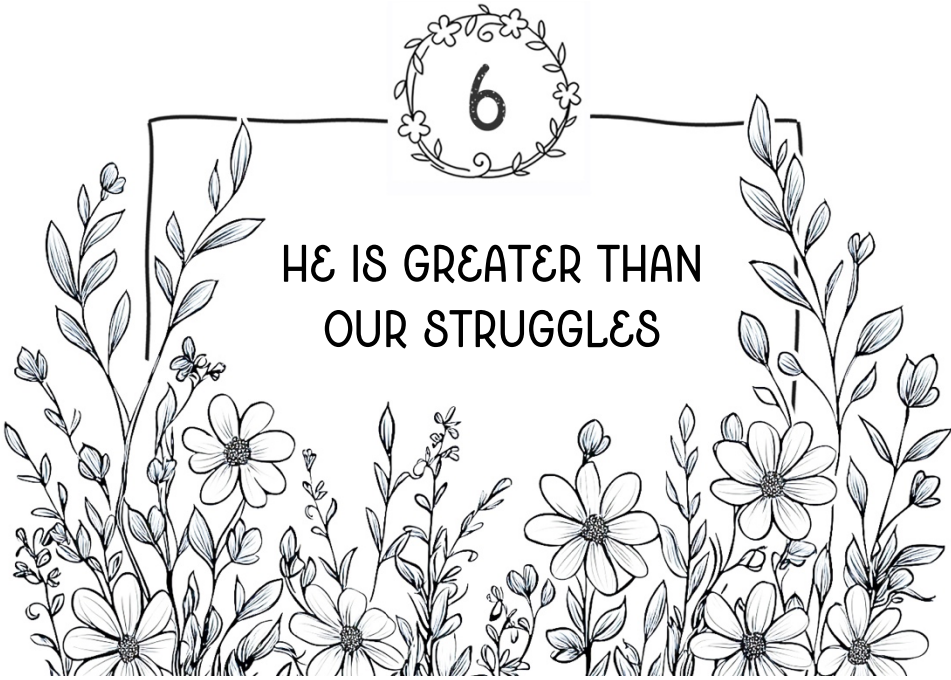


The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.

– Psalm 19:8







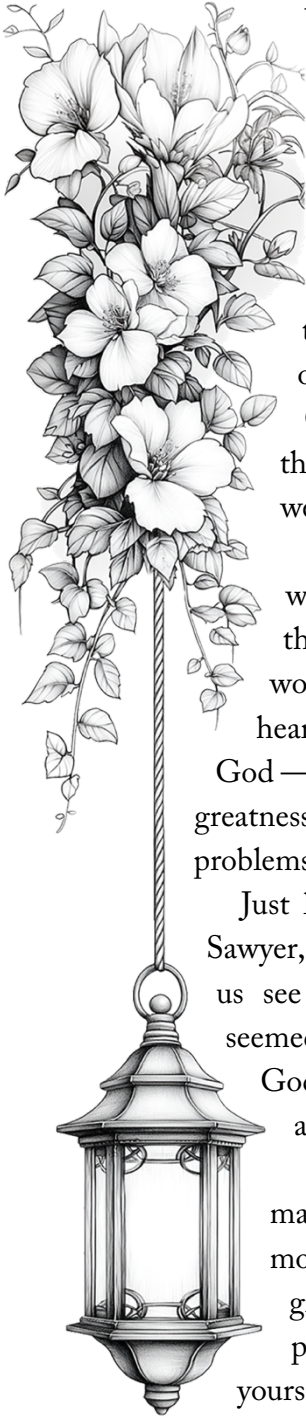
Have you ever had one of those moments where your perception suddenly shifts? When something you thought was real was just a matter of perspective? That happened to me yesterday when my daughter brought over her two little pugs, for a visit. At least I used to think they were little. For years, Oliver and Sadie, were dwarfed by our Bull Mastiff, Gabby, who passed away a couple of months ago.

*Glorify the
Lord with me;
let us exalt his
name together.*

—Psalm 34:3

After her passing, my husband Michael bought me a Yorkshire Terrier. If you've never seen a Yorkie, picture an adorable squirrel with a big bark. Sawyer is so small that my grandchildren want to put him in the dollhouse. One day, I couldn't find him and after searching everywhere, I saw two little eyes peeking out of the dollhouse window. He's a character, to say the least.

Two months into living with Sawyer, my daughter brought Sadie and Oliver over for a visit. But, here's the thing—the moment they walked through the door, I was stunned. These "little" pugs I'd always thought of as tiny were towering, muscular dogs in comparison to my pint-sized



Yorkie. They hadn't changed, but my perception of them had. What I thought was "small" wasn't small at all — at least not anymore.

That got me thinking about the power of perception, and how deceitful it can be. Problems we face often seem enormous because we're so close to them. We magnify our struggles, seeing them as towering giants, and in the process, we shrink God in our minds. But God hasn't changed. He's still the Creator of the universe, the One who speaks and calms the storm, the One who can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

When we're consumed by the size of our problems, we need a shift in perspective. Psalm 34:3 says, "Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together." The word "exalt" means to magnify or make bigger in our hearts and minds. This doesn't mean we change the size of God — He's already infinite. But when we focus on Him, His greatness, and His faithfulness, our perception shifts, and our problems fall into their proper place.

Just like I saw those pugs differently after being around Sawyer, spending time in God's Word and in prayer can help us see our circumstances differently. The problems that seemed insurmountable before pale in comparison to the God we serve. He's bigger than our struggles, and He's already gone ahead of us to make a way.

So, what's clouding your joy today? Are you magnifying the problem or magnifying God? Take a moment to shift your focus, remembering that He is greater than anything you face. The next time your perception makes a small thing look big, remind yourself that your God is bigger.

THE POWER OF PERSPECTIVE

The story of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17) teaches us how the right perspective can change everything. When the Israelites saw Goliath, they magnified his size and strength. David, on the other hand, chose to magnify the Lord. This shift in perspective gave him the confidence to face the giant.

MAGNIFYING THE PROBLEM

The Israelites were consumed by fear. They saw Goliath as an unbeatable giant, focusing only on his size, his strength, and his threats. Their perception of the problem overwhelmed their faith and paralyzed them into inaction. "On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified." —1 Samuel 17:11 (NIV)

MAGNIFYING GOD

David saw the same giant, but his perspective was different. He magnified God's power instead of the enemy's strength. David remembered God's faithfulness, saying, "The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37).

VICTORY THROUGH FAITH

With just a sling and a stone, David defeated Goliath. His victory wasn't because of his own strength but because of his trust in God. David's story reminds us that when we focus on God's power, no challenge is too great. "All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands." —1 Samuel 17:47 (NIV)

READ AND REFLECT

Whenever we're facing worry and doubt, we can shift our perspective, just like David did, by remembering who God is. Read the following verses and write down what you know about God beside each one:

Psalms 46:1

Jeremiah 32:17

Isaiah 41:10

Jeremiah 29:11





Your sorrow itself shall be turned into joy. Not the sorrow to be taken away, and joy to be put in its place, but the very sorrow which now grieves you shall be turned into joy. God not only takes away the bitterness and gives sweetness in its place, but turns the bitterness into sweetness itself.

- Charles H. Spurgeon

More Food for Thought...

What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us,
who can be against us?

– Romans 8:31



So we say with confidence: "The Lord is my helper; I will not
be afraid. What can man do to me?"

– Hebrews 3:16



Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,
according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church
and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

– Ephesians 3:20-21



Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but
with God all things are possible."

– Matthew 19:6



The LORD is on my side; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

– Psalm 118:6

Thoughts
and Jots

