

The 4 Gifts

DISCOVER THE BEAUTY
OF CHRISTMAS WRAPPED
UP IN GOD'S LOVE

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The 4 Gifts: Discover the Beauty of Christmas Wrapped Up in God’s Love

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The 4 Gifts

DISCOVER THE BEAUTY
OF CHRISTMAS WRAPPED
UP IN GOD'S LOVE

Darlene Schacht

Time-Warp Wife Ministries

 Time-Warp Wife
MINISTRIES

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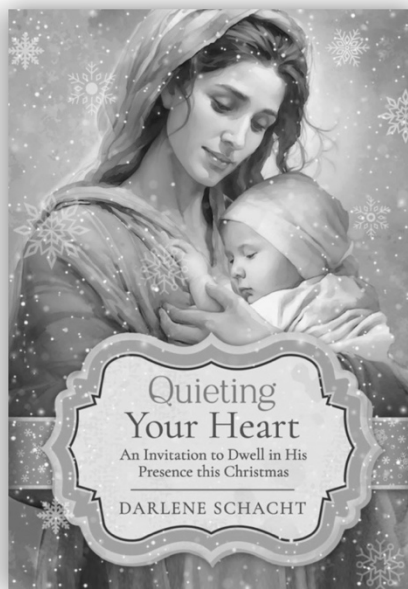
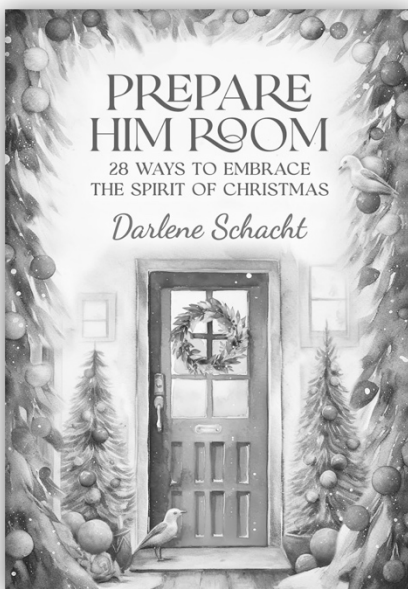
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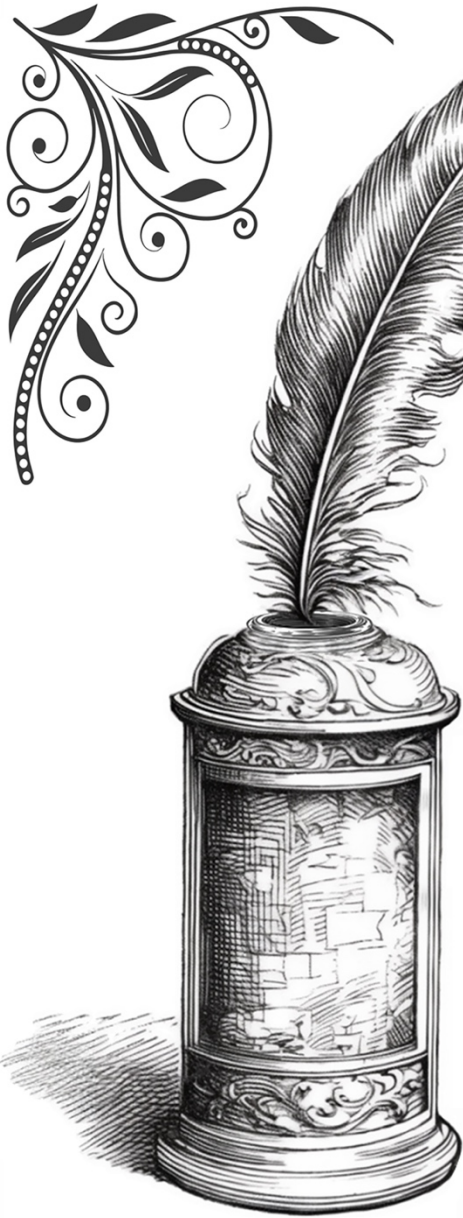
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by Darlene Schacht



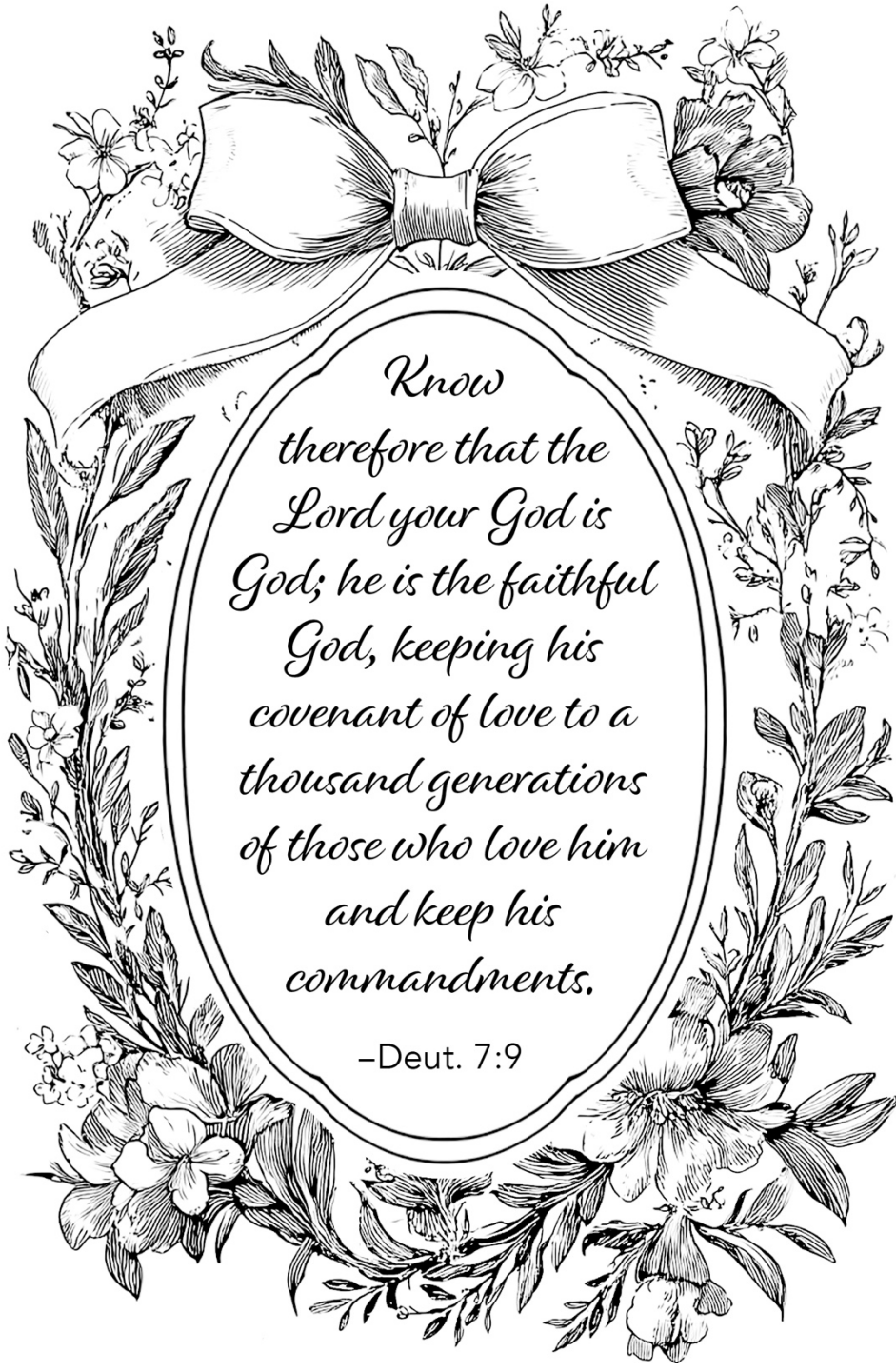


Every
GOOD GIFT
AND EVERY
perfect
GIFT IS FROM
ABOVE,
AND COMES DOWN
FROM THE
Father
OF LIGHTS,
WITH WHOM THERE
IS NO VARIATION
OR
Shadow
OF TURNING

James 1:17, NKJV

Unwrapping
the
Faithful Love
of God





*Know
therefore that the
Lord your God is
God; he is the faithful
God, keeping his
covenant of love to a
thousand generations
of those who love him
and keep his
commandments.*

-Deut. 7:9

Love That Keeps Promises



Suggested Reading: Luke 1:5–25

In this passage, Zechariah and Elizabeth learn what it means to wait on God's timing. Their long season of silence ends with the promise of a son who would prepare the way for the Messiah. As you read, notice how God was working all along—quietly, faithfully, and right on time.

Optional Reading: Galatians 4:4–7

Paul reminds us that God sent His Son “when the set time had fully come.” Let this verse reassure you that God's timing in your life is never late and never wasted.



It was supposed to be a quick stop—just a run into Target. “I’ll meet you right back here,” Michael said. But an hour and forty-five minutes later, I was still waiting, blinking back tears, wondering where he was and if he was ok. I had wasted the afternoon in a parking lot, watching time slip away on the clock.

He thought he was giving me time to shop. I thought he was coming right back. Same place. Same plan. But we weren’t on the same page.

Waiting can feel like that, can’t it?

Like something’s gone wrong. Like maybe you misunderstood.

Or worse—maybe you’ve been forgotten.

Have you ever been there with God?

You’re praying. Hoping. Believing. The days turn into weeks... and then months. And still, the promise lingers.

Some days it feels like our prayers might never be answered. Especially in the quiet. In the waiting. When the world is moving too fast and your hope feels slow to catch up.

You ask God to heal your marriage. To bring your prodigal son or daughter back home. To open a door that’s been closed for too long. And when you don’t see change taking place, you start to wonder if your prayers are long forgotten.

If that’s you, can we pause for a moment to consider this truth?

Silence isn’t a sign of His absence. In fact, it’s often the place where faith is developed, trust is refined, and endurance takes root.



We're not the first ones to find ourselves in seasons of waiting. Long before Jesus was born, God's people were holding their breath for the promise of a coming Messiah. They had the prophecies. They knew the Scriptures. And still, the fulfillment for some would be thousands of years. Generations passed, and with them, centuries of silence. But through it all, hope lived on.

It wasn't wishful thinking or blind optimism that anchored their faith. It was the character of God—the same faithful God we rely on today. This is the essence of Advent. A season of waiting and hope, trusting that what God has promised will be fulfilled.

Hebrews 11:13 points us back to the kind of soul-shaking, heart-rooted faith that anchors our souls:

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.

From the stars that Abraham counted...
To the star that led the wise men to Christ...
God's love was faithful. And still is today.



Wise Men Still Geek Him

Others have promised and failed. But God has promised and succeeded. He loves you with an unfailing love.

—Max Lucado

Galatians 4:4 reminds us, “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son...” Not a minute too early. Not a second too late. Right on time.

And that same faithful God who moved heaven and earth to send His Son into the world is at work in your life today.

This is the beauty of Christmas. This is the gift.

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.

—James 5:7-8

❓ As you read Galatians 4:4-7, write down one promise you’re trusting God to fulfill this Christmas—remembering that His timing is always perfect and never too late.

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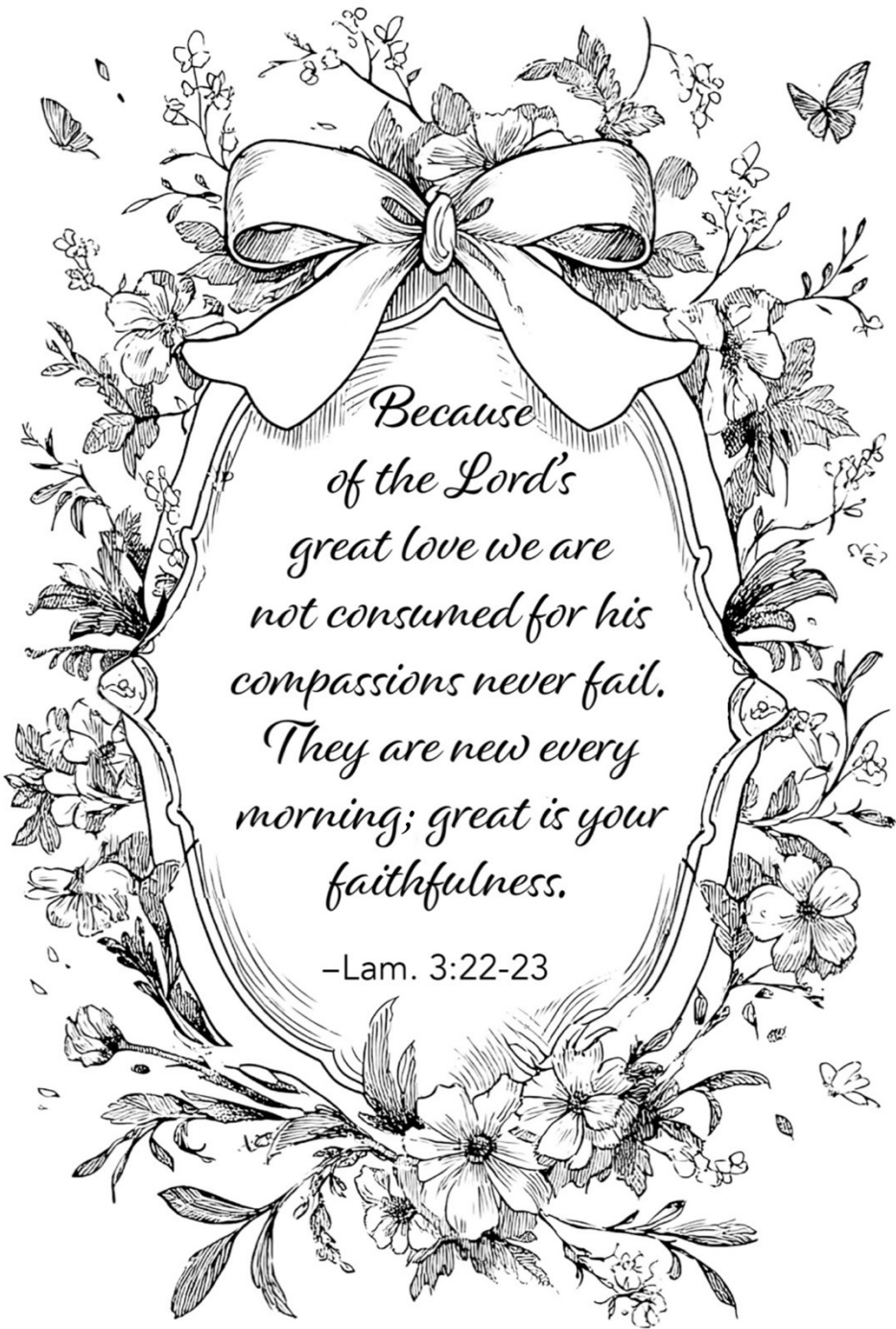
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Unwrapping the Gift

After you write down that promise, place it somewhere visible—by your sink, your mirror, or tucked in your Bible—and every time you see it, whisper, “I will wait.”





*Because
of the Lord's
great love we are
not consumed for his
compassions never fail.
They are new every
morning; great is your
faithfulness.*

-Lam. 3:22-23

Love That Never Ends



Suggested Reading: Lamentations 3:19-26

These verses were written by Jeremiah in the aftermath of deep sorrow and loss. As you read, remember that God's mercy is fresh every morning. His compassions never fail, even when life feels broken or uncertain.

Optional Reading: Titus 3:3-7

Paul reminds us that it was God's mercy—not our goodness—that saves us. Let this passage remind you that grace meets you right where you are, and that His love still holds steady today.



Everything they once held certain was lost. The city had fallen. The temple lay in ruins. Families were grieving, their homes destroyed. And right there in the middle of sorrow and ashes, Jeremiah lifted his eyes to remind them of something powerful: “We are not consumed.”

Why not? Because God’s mercy holds steady.

Friend, maybe you’ve had seasons when you didn’t walk as closely with the Lord as you knew you should have. Times when you drifted. When guilt ran deep and you wondered if grace could still reach you.

But even there—even in failure and regret—you’re not beyond the reach of mercy. God doesn’t hold us by our performance. He holds us by His promise.

That’s what Jeremiah clung to—not his righteousness, not Israel’s obedience. Just mercy. Still flowing, still faithful—even when they didn’t deserve it.

It wasn’t about what they had done for God—it was about what God had done for them. Mercy in their rebellion. Compassion that didn’t wait for perfection. A love that refused to let go.

But God demonstrates his own love
for us in this: While we were still
sinners, Christ died for us.

—Romans 5:8



Do we really understand the depth of God's love? Do we think it's only ours when we're doing well? When we're strong, obedient, full of faith?

Don't get me wrong—our faithfulness matters. We're called to walk in obedience, to live in step with the Spirit, and to respond to His grace with a life that honors Him.

But the truth is, God's love shows up even when we don't. It isn't fragile. It doesn't walk away when we fail. It doesn't dry up in the wilderness. And His mercy? It's new. Every single morning. For you.

Jesus didn't come into a world that was ready for Him. He came into a world that had lost its way—with compassion, grace, and unfailing love.

From a desperate world lost in sin and shame...

To light piercing the darkness...

God's love was faithful. And still is today.

That's the foundation we stand on—not what we've done for Him, but what He's done for us.

Our story doesn't end in ashes. What sin broke, He made whole. What shame had stained, He covered with grace.

His love isn't fickle—it's faithful.

The kind of love that doesn't back down when life gets hard. That stays when others walk away. That brings hope when everything feels hopeless.



As you read Lamentations 3:21-26, write down one way God's mercy has met you in a season when you felt undeserving of His grace.

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Jesus didn't come with fanfare or comfort. He laid aside heaven's glory and stepped into our mess. Not to observe it—but to carry it. Wrapped in humility, clothed in rags, laid in a feeding trough.

We like to picture it sweet and serene, but the stable wasn't about sentiment. It was sacrifice—a holy descent into broken humanity.

And that same love? It walked dusty roads. It reached out to the untouchable. Restored the weary. Forgave the worst of sins.

Then, with arms wide open, it embraced the cross—carrying our shame, our pain, our sin—with unwavering love.

That's what we celebrate at Christmas.

Not just a baby in a manger, but the mercy of God made flesh.

But when the kindness and love of God
our Savior appeared, he saved us, not
because of righteous things we had done,
but because of his mercy.

—Titus 3:4-5

Not the perfect holiday—but a perfect Savior who came for imperfect people like you and me.

So if today feels heavy... if sorrow has settled in and hope feels far—listen to this, friend: You are not consumed.

God's love hasn't dried up. His mercy hasn't quit on you.

His compassions are new. Not just someday—today, tomorrow, and every day after that. When you wake up, they'll be waiting.

This is the beauty of Christmas. This is the gift.



As you reflect on the birth of Christ, write down two ways the Christmas story reminds you that God's love doesn't wait for perfection—it meets us right where we are.

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Wise Men Still Gossip Him

Nothing binds me to my Lord like a strong belief in His changeless love.

—Charles Spurgeon

Unwrapping the Gift

Reach out to someone who might feel like they've messed up—someone who's struggling, withdrawn or distant.

Send a short text, leave a note, or offer a simple "I'm thinking of you."

Let your words be a reflection of God's mercy: undeserved, unwavering, and full of grace.



*If we are
faithless, he
remains faithful,
for he
cannot disown
himself.*

-2 Tim. 2:13

Love That Holds Us Steady



Suggested Reading: John 21:1-19

This passage tells the beautiful story of Jesus restoring Peter after his denial. As you read, picture the shoreline and the fire burning there. Hear Jesus' gentle question—"Do you love me?"—as if He were asking you the same. Let His mercy quiet your shame and His grace remind you that failure isn't the end of your story.

Optional Reading: Luke 22:31-34, 54-62

Before Peter denied Jesus, the Lord warned him that Satan had asked to "sift him as wheat." Yet Jesus also said, "I have prayed for you... and when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." These verses show the full picture—Peter's fall and Jesus' foreknowledge of his restoration. As you read, notice how mercy was already waiting for Peter before he even failed.



I set out to make Christmas different. I say I won't overspend—I'll stick to the budget, slow down, and really soak in the season. I picture peaceful evenings, quiet moments with the Lord, and a heart that stays focused on what matters most.

And then?

I'm knee-deep in Amazon boxes, I'm spending less time with God than I'd like to, and I've said "yes" to too many things.

We've all had those moments when we're doing our best to live a good life, and somehow, we mess it all up.

We lose our cool.

We fight with our husband.

We stop reading our Bibles.

We let the dishes pile.

We overspend.

We overeat.

We overcommit.

And before we know it, the joy we longed for feels out of reach. The peace we hoped to find has been buried under a pile of to-do lists and expectations. We look around and wonder how something so sacred became so stressful.



We get down on ourselves because we know that the way we should live isn't lining up with the actions we take. The harder we try, the more aware we become of our weakness. Even when our intentions are good, our follow-through often falls short.

If you're anything like me, you've felt that way more than once. And let's be frank here—it isn't about the cookies, the clutter, or the missed morning devotions—it's about the battle between who we are and who we're called to be. It's about the guilt we carry when we stumble and fall.

But here's the good news of the gospel:

God doesn't give up when we fall short.

He steps in with grace.

He pours out His mercy.

He does the rebuilding we could never do on our own.



Can you think of a time—perhaps recently—when you felt you had fallen short? How might Jesus be inviting you to exchange your guilt for grace and your regret for restoration?

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Remember Peter?

I can almost feel the weight of his heart the night the rooster crowed. Hours earlier, he had promised Jesus, “Even if all fall away... I never will.” But by morning, he had denied Him. Not just once in a moment of fear—three separate times. And when he realized what he had done, he went outside and wept bitterly.

That kind of sorrow is familiar to anyone who’s tried and failed and felt unworthy of a second chance.

But Jesus didn’t leave Peter in his shame.

After the resurrection, He went looking for him. And when He found him? He didn’t just restore Peter’s faith—He restored Peter’s heart.

On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus met him with breakfast and grace.

“Do you love me?” He asked.

Not, “Why did you fail me?”

Not, “How could you deny me?”
Just, “Do you love me?”
And with every yes, Jesus gave Peter his calling back.

Though he may stumble, he will
not fall for the LORD upholds him
with his hand.

—Psalm 37:24

That’s the kind of Savior we have. He sustains us when we stumble—
forgives when we fall. And when our best intentions collapse, His love holds
us steady and sure.

From the dusk of shame and denial...

To the dawn of mercy and grace...

God’s love was faithful. And still is today.

Maybe we haven’t denied Christ in the
courtyard, but even so, we’ve all had those
moments of guilt and regret. Choices we’d
like to take back, words we’d like to erase,
bad habits we wish we could break...
And just like Peter we need God’s
mercy and grace.

Christmas changed everything.
Bringing light to the darkness, Jesus
stepped into the chaos with calm. He
didn’t come for the polished or perfect. He
came for the weary. The guilty. The broken.
The lost. He came for Peter. He came for
you and for me.

This is the beauty of Christmas.
This is the gift.

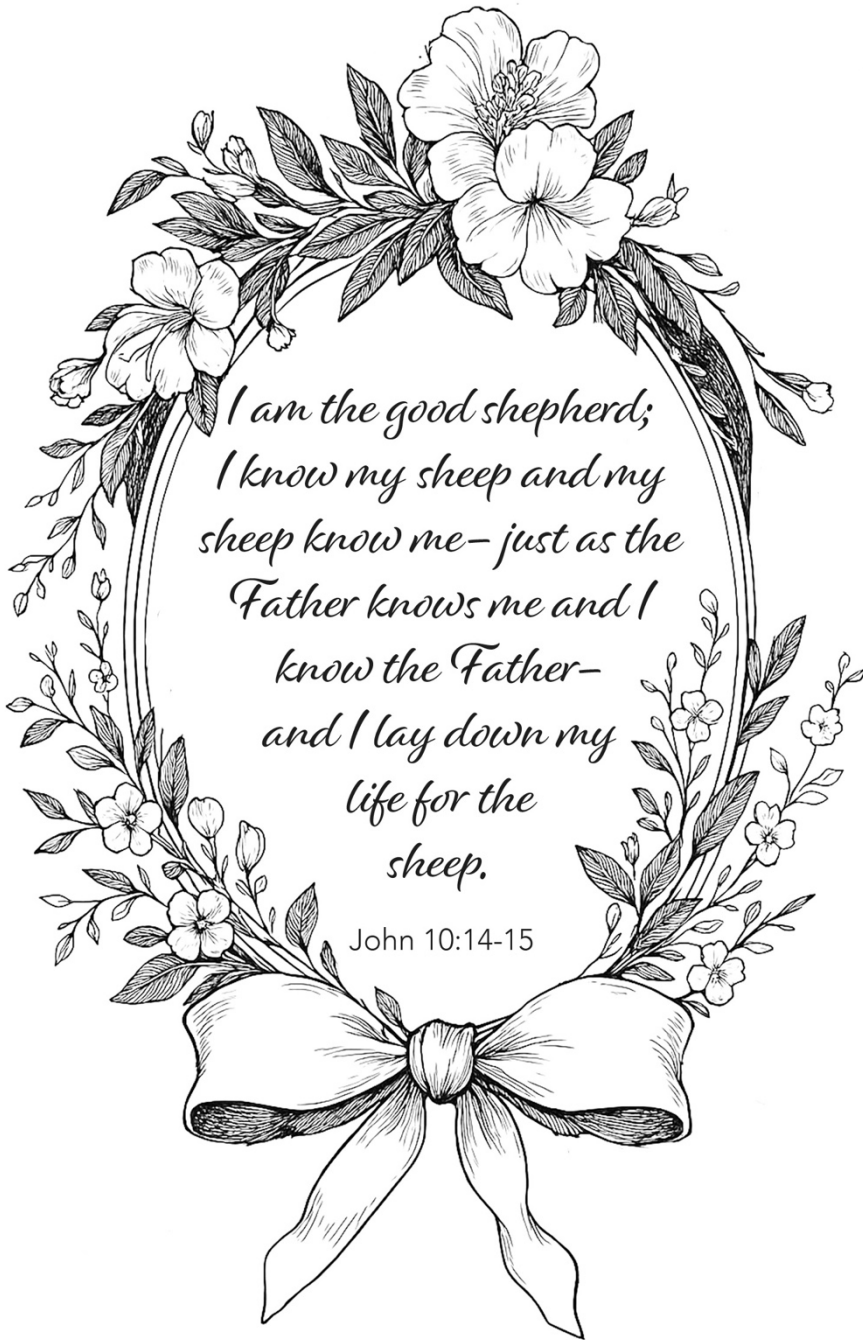




Unwrapping the Gift

Think back to a moment this month when you've felt like you fell short—whether it was your words, your tone, or your choices. Don't brush it off. Don't carry the shame.

Instead, bring it to Jesus in prayer. Ask Him to use it—to teach you, grow you, or even to bless someone else through it.



*I am the good shepherd;
I know my sheep and my
sheep know me—just as the
Father knows me and I
know the Father—
and I lay down my
life for the
sheep.*

John 10:14-15

Love That Guides and Protects



Suggested Reading: John 10:1-18

In this passage, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd—the One who knows His sheep, calls them by name, and willingly lays down His life for them. As you read, picture His care over you: steady, strong, and unchanging.

Optional Reading: Luke 2:8-20

This is the account of the shepherds on that first Christmas night. As you read their story, remember that the same God who invited them to witness His glory also invites you to draw near and behold His love.



If you've spent any time in your Bible, you've read about a shepherd or two. Jacob was one. So was Moses. And David—the boy with a sling and a song—tended sheep long before he wore a crown. Back in those days, being a shepherd wasn't glamorous, but it was respected. It took grit, patience, and a heart willing to lead with steady care.

By the time Jesus was born, that reputation had shifted. Shepherds weren't as honored as they once were. In fact, they were viewed as social outcasts—dirty, unclean, unreliable. Still, they showed up, day after day. In the shadows, far from the center of town, doing the work no one else wanted to do—guiding, guarding, and giving their lives to the flock in their care.

They carried a rod for defense and a staff for guidance—tools of both strength and gentleness. Every sound in the night kept them alert, every shadow tested their courage. A good shepherd knew the distinct bleat of each sheep and could tell when one was in distress. He would count them as they entered the fold, inspecting each one for thorns, cuts, or bruises before letting them rest. The safety of the flock depended entirely on his watchful care day in and day out.

And when moonlight spilled across the hush of a sleeping sky? The shepherds lay down with their sheep.

Not just anywhere.

Across the entrance of the pen.

Like a gate.

His body—a barrier between the flock and the dangers of the dark.
No door to close. No wall to seal them in. Just him.

A posture of protection, of self-sacrifice, and of deep responsibility.
Perhaps that's how the angel found them that first Christmas night, when
the sky opened up and the glory of God shone around them.

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you
good news that will cause great joy for all the
people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been
born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

—Luke 2:10-11

The long awaited Messiah had come—the fulfillment of every promise God
made. The Lamb of God. Light of the world. The Shepherd who would lay
down His life for the sheep. He taught with authority. He healed with
compassion. He moved with power and lived with perfect obedience to the
Father. His words brought life. His presence brought peace. And His love?
It never wavered. Not once.





What are some of the attributes of a shepherd that remind you of Jesus?

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“The Good Shepherd” wasn’t just a picture of His care—it was a declaration of His mission. Every step He took, every word He spoke, every miracle He performed—was marked by love so faithful that it led Him to the cross. A love that saw the unseen, reached for the broken, stood firm when others walked away. And because of that love, He laid His life down for the flock. Willingly. Purposefully. Lovingly. No one forced His hand. He surrendered it. For the sake of those He came to save. For the sake of you.

And here’s where it reaches into our lives:

Maybe you're walking through a season where the path ahead feels uncertain. Maybe you're tired of being the strong one. Or maybe—like those forgotten shepherds—you feel unseen, unworthy, on the outside looking in. That’s exactly where the Good Shepherd meets you.



Wise Men Still Seek Him

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He knows your name. He hears your cry. And He will lead you safely through.

-Anne Graham Lotz

The Lord will keep you from all harm—He will watch
over your life; the Lord will watch over your
coming and going both now and forevermore.

—Psalm 121:7-8

He doesn't wait for you to impress Him. He meets you right there—in the middle of the field, in the dark of night, surrounding you with His presence. He knows your name. He walks ahead of you. And when the wolves of fear, grief, or confusion press in, He steps forward and stands guard—comforting, protecting and guiding your steps.

From a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes...

To the Shepherd who laid down His life...

God's love was faithful. And still is today.

Steady. Strong. Unchanging.

Just like the Shepherd who watches over you still.

This is the beauty of Christmas. This is the gift.

Unwrapping the Gift

Read Psalm 23 slowly, out loud if you can. Let each line settle in your heart as a personal reminder of the Shepherd's care.

❓ The shepherds were the first to hear the good news of Christ's birth. Given their low status in society at that time, what does this reveal about God's heart?

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*As far as the east
is from the west,
so far has he
removed our
transgressions
from us.*

Psalm 103:12

Love That Forgives Again & Again



Suggested Reading: Zechariah 3:1-5

In this passage, Joshua the high priest stands accused before God—dirty, unworthy, and ashamed. But God steps in and declares him clean, clothing him in new garments. As you read, remember this: your forgiveness doesn't rest on what you can scrub away, but on what Jesus has already made spotless.

Optional Reading: Isaiah 61:10

Isaiah rejoices, saying, *“He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of His righteousness.”* Let these words remind you that God's forgiveness isn't fragile—it's finished.



My grandchildren are nothing short of adorable. After they drop their bags in the bedroom and settle in for a stay, they climb up on the stools in the kitchen to do a little crafting with Grandma. Joseph won't stay there too long, but Julia? When she's got a glue stick and pencil in hand, wild ponies can't drag her away. Just like her mom—creative and always ready to draw.

I still remember the day Madison got hold of a pen and decided our brand-new white chair was her canvas. There's something about kids and markers—they find the one thing that can leave a permanent mark and go for it. I've cleaned crayon off walls, glitter glue off the dog, and paint out of hair, but that chair? That one stung. It wasn't just any chair. It was *new*. Madison's artwork wasn't exactly what I had in mind for décor, but she was so proud of it.

I had serious doubts the marks would ever come out, but when the stain doctor showed up—that deep-blue ink disappeared. Completely. It was like it had never been there at all.

As I got to thinking about that today, it reminded me of something much deeper—something holy. In Zechariah chapter 3, we're invited into a heavenly courtroom. Joshua the high priest is standing before the angel of the Lord. His clothing is stained, sullied, and completely unfit for the presence of God. Standing right beside him is Satan, doing what he does best: accusing.

He loves to bring up every wrong move, doesn't he? Every failure we've had. Every sin we've committed. That's what the enemy does. He attacks our identity, equating it to the sum of our sin.

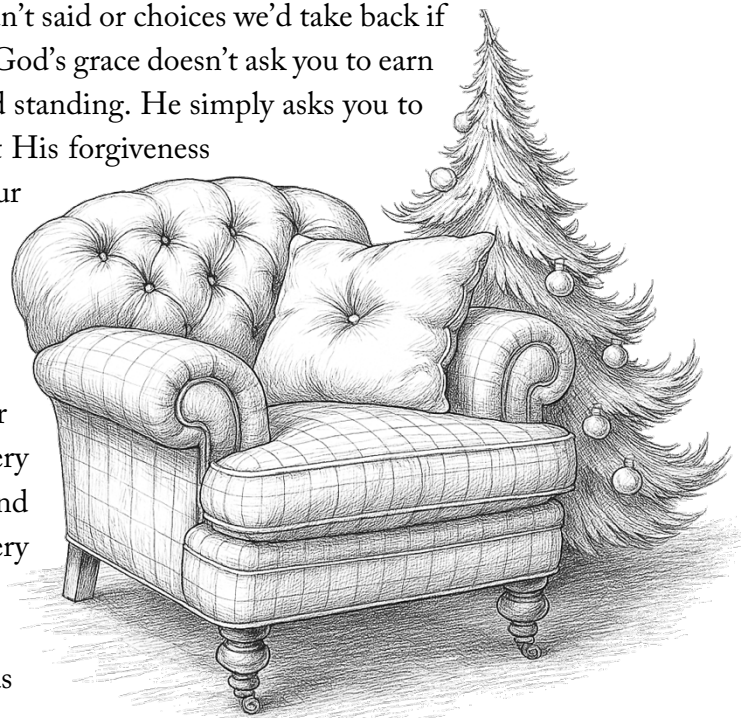
But listen to what happens next. The Lord doesn't rebuke Joshua—He rebukes Satan. He doesn't agree with the accusations—He overrides them. "Take off his filthy clothes," He says. "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you" (Zechariah 3:4).

Isn't that stunning? A foreshadow of the gospel, revealed in Christ. Joshua didn't make himself clean. He couldn't. It was God who stepped in and provided the cleansing. That's what the cross accomplished. That's what Christmas began.

Jesus didn't come into this world to find perfect people. He came to rescue broken people like you and me. He came for those who scribbled on the chairs of life making a mess of things so bad they wondered if it could ever come clean.

And maybe that's where some of us find ourselves today—trying to scrub away the stains of regret or fix what feels beyond repair. We replay words we wish we hadn't said or choices we'd take back if we could. But friend, God's grace doesn't ask you to earn your way back to good standing. He simply asks you to come—to believe that His forgiveness

is stronger than your failure, and His love is steady even when yours has wavered. That's not just truth for back then; it's for us—today. For every man with shame and remorse. For every woman with a checkered past. It's for you, even now as



you're standing at the kitchen sink weighed down by the feelings of guilt and regret.

He came to take away our sin and shame. To clothe us in salvation and wrap us in His righteousness. Isaiah says it so beautifully:

He has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.
—Isaiah 61:10

❓ As you read Zechariah 3:1-5, write down one truth that reminds you your forgiveness rests on what Christ has done—not on what you can fix or earn.

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And that robe? It's not temporary. It's not borrowed. It's yours. When you come to the Savior and lay down your sin, He removes it. He doesn't set it aside to look back on—it's gone.

Some days it's hard to forgive our own sin, but remember my friend—God's grace is greater than guilt. His forgiveness surpasses the East. His mercy reaches far beyond West. God's love was faithful. And still is today.

He doesn't ask us to wallow in sorrow.

He invites us to walk in His mercy.

To rest in forgiveness.

To live in His love.

This is the beauty of Christmas. This is the gift.

Wise Men Still Seek Him

We please God most not by frantically trying to make ourselves good but by throwing ourselves into His arms with all our imperfections, and believing He understands everything—and still loves us.

—A.W. Towser

❓ As you read Isaiah 61:10, write down two ways the message of Christmas reminds you that Jesus came to remove your guilt and clothe you in His righteousness.

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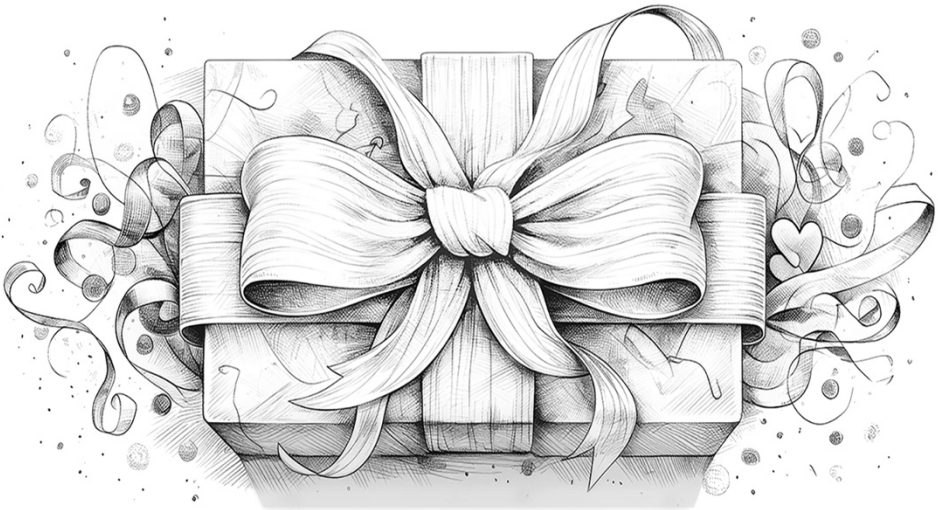
Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your
sins may be wiped out, that times of
refreshing may come from the Lord.
—Acts 3:19

Unwrapping the Gift

Ask God to bring to mind any guilt or shame you've been holding onto. If you've repented of that sin, then write it down and read Psalm 103:12 out loud:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Tear up the paper—or throw it away—as a reminder that in Christ, your sin is forgiven and taken away.





*So do not fear,
for I am with you;
do not be dismayed,
for I am your God.
I will strengthen you
and help you;
I will uphold you
with my righteous
right hand.*

-Isaiah 41:10

Love That Carries Us Through



Suggested Reading: Luke 1:26-38

This passage describes the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary, delivering a message that would change her life forever. As you read, imagine the courage it took to respond, "I am the Lord's servant." Ask God to give you the same trusting heart that says yes even when the road ahead looks uncertain.

Optional Reading: Isaiah 40:28-31

Isaiah reminds us that those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. If you're weary, let these verses remind you that God never grows tired or weary, and His strength is enough to carry you through every step.



My son and I went for a walk—much farther than I had planned. I hadn't been walking much this past year, so I figured a short stroll would be all I could do. "I'll go, but nothing too far," I told him. "My back won't handle it." I meant it, too. These days, even a few blocks is enough.

But that afternoon? We went for miles. Through the neighborhood, down snowy trails, over hills, and even through a quiet, wooded path. The cold air brushed our cheeks, our boots crunched against the frozen ground, and for a little while it felt like the world had paused. Everything was still.

"Just a bit further," he kept saying. And somehow, step by step, I kept going. Just when I thought I had nothing left, I found strength for one step. Then another. And finally—we made it home.

With rosy cheeks and aching legs, I sank into a chair and opened my Bible to Luke chapter 1. There I find the story of Mary—a young girl chosen to carry the Savior. A virgin with a divine calling, walking into a season she never saw coming. There she was on that first Christmas night, weary and uncomfortable, with nowhere to lay her head but a stable filled with straw.

Obedience is rarely easy, and it's not always convenient. You'd think the hardest part would've been behind her after the laborious night in Bethlehem—but no—that wasn't her story. Soon after the birth she was fleeing to Egypt with a child in arms and danger chasing her steps. That's a lot for anyone to face, never mind a young mother.



And yet, God was with her. Through the fear. Through the unknown. Through every twist in the road. Step by step, He carried her through.

Friend, that's the kind of God that we serve. He doesn't just call us—He strengthens us. He doesn't just ask us to walk in obedience—He walks alongside us. Whether we're facing physical pain or emotional strain, we're upheld by His strength.



Can you think of a time when you felt like you had nothing left to give, yet God gave you the strength to take one more step? How might remembering His past faithfulness help you trust Him in what you're walking through today or facing in the future?

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Throughout scripture we're reminded just how faithful He is.
When God's people wandered through the wilderness, unsure of what was ahead, He made a way through.
When they were trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea, He split the waters.
When they were hungry, He sent manna.
When they were weak, He gave them strength.
And we serve the same faithful God.
He sets the boundaries. He draws the map. And when we feel like we're at our limit—when we've had all we can take—He equips us to take one more step.

That matters even more during the Christmas season. Because let's be honest—this time of year can bring its own kind of temptations. Temptations to overspend, overcommit, compare ourselves to others, or forget what truly matters. We're pulled in a hundred directions and it's easy to feel like we're falling short.

Maybe this year, the ache goes deeper for you. Maybe there's an empty seat at the table that reminds you of who's no longer here. Maybe there's a sickness weighing you down or stealing joy from someone you love. Maybe you've lost a job, or you're carrying the weight of a fractured relationship.

Whatever you're facing, remember this, friend: God's presence doesn't pull back from our pain—He draws closer.

From the moment Mary said yes to God's call...
To the day she stood at the foot of the cross...
God's love was faithful. And still is today.



Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged,
for the LORD your God will be with
you wherever you go.

—Joshua 1:9

Emmanuel—God with us—entered our broken world and walked straight into our need. The same God who led Mary and Joseph through the chaos and uncertainty of that first Christmas is with you even now.

He knows every step you're taking. He sees what others can't. And He is not leaving you without help, without comfort, or without a way forward.

Keep walking. One step at a time. Not in your own strength, but in His. This is the beauty of Christmas. This is the gift.

Unwrapping the Gift

At some point today, pause and take a quiet walk—even if it's just around your home or to the mailbox.

As you walk, use that time to pray or simply reflect on how God has brought you through difficult seasons.

Let every step remind you that you're not walking alone.

❓ As you reflect on Isaiah 40:28-31, write down two ways the message of Christmas reminds you that God’s strength is enough to sustain you—no matter how weary you feel.

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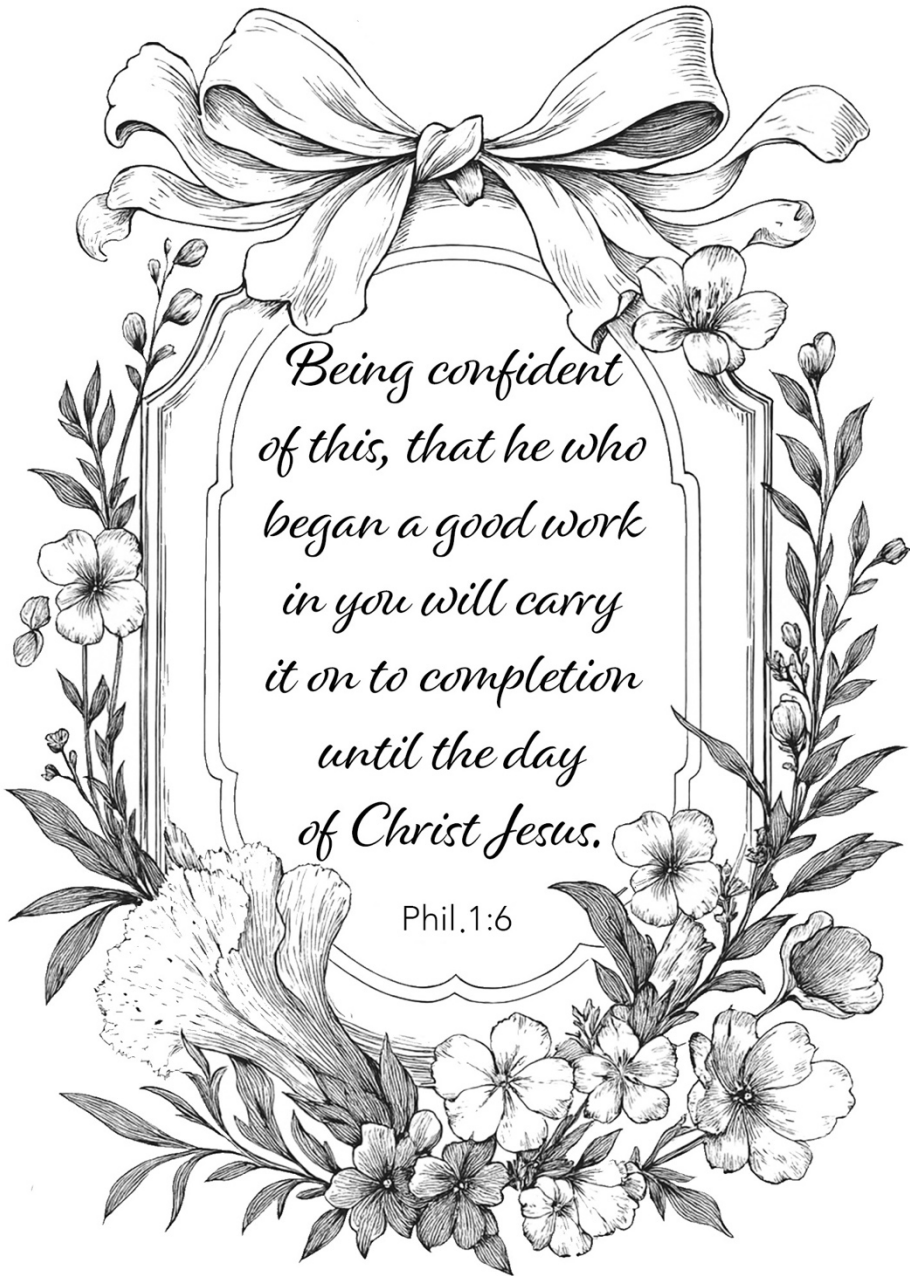


Wise Men Still Seek Him

We don’t have to know all the answers. We just have to stay close to the One who does.

-Lysa Terkeurst





*Being confident
of this, that he who
began a good work
in you will carry
it on to completion
until the day
of Christ Jesus.*

Phil. 1:6

Love That Finishes What He Starts



Suggested Reading: Philippians 1:3-6

In this passage, Paul reminds believers that the God who began a good work in them will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. As you read, let this truth settle into your heart—God’s work in you isn’t finished yet, and He never leaves projects incomplete.

Optional Reading: Romans 8:28-30

Paul reminds us that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him. Even when the process feels messy or slow, His plan is unfolding perfectly—shaping you to reflect His glory.



Anytime I have a few minutes to spare, I like to create. These days it's been doll furniture. Last night I picked up a piece of light blue plaid with a vision of recreating the Full House sofa. Last week, I made a red leather armchair with a tufted back and brass studs. I have to admit, that one wasn't easy. Getting those miniature studs to align was a nightmare, but I made a decision a few years back to finish a project before moving on to the next—regardless of how challenging it might be.

I haven't always been that way. For most of my life, I was the queen of unfinished projects—always telling myself I'd get back to them "someday." But let's be honest... someday usually meant never. The excitement would fade, the motivation would slip away, and the project would sit in a box at the back of my closet, untouched and forgotten.

As I got to thinking about that today, I was reminded of God's faithfulness toward us. How He doesn't give up when the going gets tough. He doesn't toss us aside when we're difficult or place us on the shelf and get back to us "someday." He stays. He pursues. He continues the work that He started in us. In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul encourages the believers by reminding them that God doesn't walk away halfway through the process.

If anyone knew the truth of that, it was Paul. He began his story as someone who resisted Christ—but the Lord met him with mercy.



From the day of his encounter on the road to Damascus, God began shaping Paul into someone new. His ministry wasn't smooth. He faced opposition, suffering, and seasons of waiting. But through it all, God kept working. Paul's life is proof that God finishes what He starts.

And that's really what Christmas is about, isn't it? The arrival of Jesus was the fulfillment of a promise God made long before Bethlehem. A promise to rescue, to redeem, to restore what was broken. The manger wasn't the beginning. It was part of a much bigger story. A story that began in the heart of God and will one day be completed when Christ returns.

From the day He began a good work in you ...

To the day He completes it...

God's love was faithful. And still is today.

Maybe you're discouraged because you've been looking over the fence—comparing yourself to the women around you and wondering why you don't quite measure up.

Maybe you're disappointed in yourself, thinking you should be further along in your faith, in your job, your weight loss, or life in general by now.

Maybe you're carrying quiet shame, convinced that the struggle you're facing disqualifies you from being used by the Lord.

If that's where you are, let me remind you of something my friend: You are a work in progress—uniquely created by the hand of the Master.

One of a kind.

Limited edition.

You.

And that kind of beauty takes time. God's not in a rush. He's not thrown off by your setbacks or sidetracked by your detours. He's patient with the process because He sees the completion. And friend, it's well worth the wait.

Perhaps that's why I love Christmas so much. It doesn't end at the manger, or at the cross. The name Jesus—which means “The Lord saves”—points us to victory through the resurrection of Christ. A quiet reminder that God doesn't leave things undone. He came to seek and save, to restore and renew, and to finish the good work He started in you.

This is the beauty of Christmas. This is the gift.

Wise Men Still Seek Him


Of one thing I am perfectly sure: God's story never ends with ashes.

-Elisabeth Elliot

Unwrapping the Gift

Do one small thing today that you've been putting off—not because it's urgent but because it matters. It could be finishing a task you've set aside, reaching out to someone that's been on your heart, or taking a step of obedience God has been prompting. As you do, thank God that He never gives up on the work He's doing in you—even when progress feels slow.



 How does the story of Christmas—the promise fulfilled in Christ—remind you that God always finishes what He starts?

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