

APRIL 2019

TODAY IN THE WORD™



Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

2 Corinthians 9:15

**EVERY GOOD
AND PERFECT GIFT**

TODAY WITH MARK JOBE

President of Moody Bible Institute

Have You Been Born Again?



John 3:16 is perhaps the most memorized verse in the entire Bible. I've seen "3:16" posted at football games, on the back of trucks, even on

T-shirts and hats. I first learned it as a child in Sunday school: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

This famous verse was first spoken during a private nighttime conversation between a very religious individual and Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, one of the strict religious groups that existed in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. He was also part of the Sanhedrin, the highest council in the Jewish government. Yet this very religious, important, and educated man was struggling to understand Jesus' teaching that we must be born again. Certainly Nicodemus had a valid question. How can anyone be born a second time?

As a parent, I remember every single one of our children's births. Our birthdays are listed on every important document. It is the moment that marked our entrance to this world. But what Jesus referred to here was a second

birth, a spiritual birth. He said that unless you are born again you can't see the kingdom of God.

Jesus challenged the belief that you could ever become good enough for God. Many still today assume that their religious tradition or even their respect for Jesus or the Bible will guarantee them entrance to heaven. But Jesus told Nicodemus, a respected religious leader, that he was missing something. Without a spiritual rebirth, "no one can enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). This rebirth is possible only through faith in the message about the Person and work of Jesus (John 3:16).

We are all sinners in desperate need of a Savior. Salvation comes only through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Because of who He is and what He has done for us, anyone who believes in Jesus Christ will have eternal life. God gave His only Son, His most precious possession, so that our sins would be fully paid before God.

God's only Son, Jesus Christ, died and was resurrected so you and I could experience new life. He came for you. He came for me. He came so we could live. If you haven't done so already, will you receive this most important gift today? ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

The Gifts of Grace

The New Testament word for gift (*charisma*) has often been translated as grace. All God's gifts reflect His grace, and the fact that they are gifts means that they are free and cannot be earned. The New Testament's theology of grace is rooted in the Old Testament idea of God's favor, which is shown to those who do not deserve it and cannot help themselves.

The psalms often plead for grace or God's favor. This might take the form of a cry for comfort in a time of affliction, forgiveness for sin, or rescue from one's enemies (Ps. 25:16–20). Usually a power disparity exists between the one who shows grace and those who experience it. (In human relationships this is often the action of a superior toward an inferior.) But the theological concept describes God's gracious act of providing for those who look to Him for help.

God's grace is the foundation of the Christian's salvation. We are saved not because of the righteous things we have done but because God has shown us mercy through Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5). Salvation is by grace because it is a gift.

Grace itself is also a gift. The New Testament concept of grace includes the idea of a dynamic power that enables those who have been saved to live the Christian life and serve God. The apostle Paul saw this power as the explanation for his own successful ministry. He worked harder than others because the grace of God was "with" him (1 Cor. 15:10).

Our efforts to serve God are like the gifts a child might give to a parent using money that the parent has provided for the purchase. The gifts we give to God are really a kind of re-gifting. Both the opportunity and the ability to serve Him are matters of grace. Because of this our efforts are not really our own. They are a result of God working through us (Gal. 2:8; Eph. 3:20). This is God working in us "to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13). The Christian life is a life of grace from beginning to end. We enter it by grace, live it by grace, and receive rewards at the end by grace. ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more, read *All of Grace* by C. H. Spurgeon (Moody Publishers).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Jamie Janosz

Share the Word!

Encourage others with *Today in the Word*

Would you like to share *Today in the Word* with others? We have free countertop displays of *Today in the Word*, with 25 sample copies of our devotional in each box. These displays are perfect to share at your church, business, or maybe even at your local medical office! You can request your displays by contacting us at (800) DL MOODY.



Twitter, or Instagram and share truth from God's Word with your friends online. Together, we can scroll into something more hopeful.

Send God's Servants to a Hurting World

Did you know that more than 49,000 Moody alumni live and serve across the globe? Moody education is donor supported. Your gift to Moody helps send students into the mission field or a ministry position following graduation.

We hope you will join us on April 16 for Moody's Launch a Leader Giving Day. We are asking God to provide \$300,000 toward students' tuition. Will you help Launch a Leader? Send your gift today! Visit launchaleader.com.

Share the Word on Social Media

Social Media can be overwhelming these days. We'd like to add some biblical encouragement to your timeline. Find *Today in the Word* on Facebook,

A Thankful Farewell

Please join us in thanking Heather Moffitt who has faithfully served as managing editor of *Today in the Word* for 20 years. As Heather moves into new endeavors of her life, we want to express our appreciation of her leadership and her work to deliver a high quality monthly devotional that offers theological depth accessible to all. Heather has recruited excellent authors and edited *Today in the Word* issues of in-depth studies of books of the Bible and Bible characters, as well as some fascinating topical studies such as Take and Eat: Food and Faith in Scripture (February 2015), I Want: Where Desire Belongs in the Life of Faith (September 2014), and Animals in the Bible (May 2011). She has also authored many studies over the years, including God Works in Humorous Ways (March 2010) and Our Identity in Christ (April 2016). Thank you, Heather!

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

Every Good and Perfect Gift

O. Henry was a master of short stories with unexpected endings. *The Last Leaf*, published in 1907, tells the story of a young woman dying of pneumonia. Her friend, an old artist, painted his “masterpiece”—a leaf on the ivy plant outside the young woman’s window. This leaf gave her a hope, a will to live and to overcome her fatalistic notion that she’ll die when the last leaf is carried away by the winter wind. Only when the woman recovers does she find out what a gift of love her friend had given her. And in a typical O. Henry twist, she also finds out that the artist had caught pneumonia while painting the leaf in the cold and died.

This tale, as well as countless others in literature and through history, echo the biblical narrative of God’s gift of love and salvation. This month in *Today in the Word* we’ll read about God’s gifts: His divine wisdom, His creation, His hope, and His faithful provision. We’ll thank Him for giving us His Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit that equip us for ministry. And above all, we’ll praise Him for the gift of eternal life and the ultimate gift of His Son who gave His life on the cross.

We pray that God’s gift of sacrificial love will fill you with gratitude and hope this month. Thank you for using *Today in the Word* as a Bible study guide. Thank you for supporting this ministry! ■

—Elena Mafter, Senior Editor

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MONDAY

APRIL

1

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

James 1:17

The Giver of Good Gifts

Peter and Mary Frey are both graduates from Moody Bible Institute whose video blog, *The Frey Life*, chronicles the ordinary events of their lives, whether checking into the hospital or running errands with their service dog. Mary, who has endured a lifelong struggle with cystic fibrosis, daily chooses joy. No matter what health issue confronts them that day, both Peter and Mary exhibit faith that shines. Their vlog has been an encouragement to thousands of viewers facing similar trials.

Our study this month is celebrating “every good and perfect gift” (v. 17) we have from God. It may surprise you to find we begin by discussing suffering. James is writing to “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations” (v. 1). Scholars believe God’s people had been scattered due to persecution and were being targeted for their beliefs. James clearly knows and understands their difficult circumstances, but he begins

his letter by urging his brothers and sisters to choose joy.

This advice may seem surprising and even offensive to someone enduring hardship. How can we react to difficult circumstances with an attitude of joy? The answer lies in our identity as children of God. Trials test our faith in God and produce perseverance and maturity (v. 4). Tests of God are different from temptations. James explains that God never tempts or tries to lure us into sinful behavior. He may provide tests or challenges, but He does not entice us to sin.

We serve a good and faithful God, the giver of life and the provider of all good things. Unlike the variable circumstances of our lives, our God never changes (v. 17)! And when we walk through the most difficult circumstances of our lives, we can put absolute trust in His faithful provision.

APPLY THE WORD

What better way to begin this study than by starting a “thankful list”? As we consider God’s gifts to us, let’s list the things God has given to us personally. Take a moment each day to write one or two things for which you are thankful, down to the tiniest detail. Keep a running list throughout this month and cultivate a heart of gratitude.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Mark Jobe, Moody’s president, welcomes your prayers as Launch a Leader, a special fundraising campaign for student tuition begins today. May God lend Dr. Jobe wisdom and grace in leadership of all Moody Bible Institute’s ministries.

If you then . . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Luke 11:13

Asking Our Father

Ricky Smith's 14-year-old daughter Nevaeha had found the perfect dress for her school dance, but her family simply could not afford it. Ricky took on additional hours at his three jobs so he could purchase it. He hid the dress in a garment bag, bringing it to the fast food chain where he was working. When Nevaeha opened the bag, she jumped into her father's arms, hugging him and sobbing in joy. "To see the look on her face was priceless," said Ricky.

If good parents desire to give their children good gifts, how much more does our heavenly Father desire to give good things to His children? Today's verse follows a discussion with Jesus' disciples about how to pray to their heavenly Father.

The Lord's Prayer, often said corporately in churches, provides an order to the way we communicate with our heavenly Father. We acknowledge

who He is and His purpose in our lives (v. 2). We ask for His provision (v. 3) and express our dependence on Him. And, finally, we ask forgiveness for our sins and confess our willingness to forgive others (v. 4).

Jesus tells His disciples to ask God, their heavenly Father, to supply their needs. As God's children, we are to ask with boldness and confidence. Consider the illustration in verses 5 through 8. The owner gives bread because of the "shameless audacity" of the request (v. 8). Jesus assures us, "Ask and it will be given to you" (v. 9).

As our Father, God wants to give us good gifts that will help and not harm us. If we ask for an egg, He will not give us a scorpion. Best of all, He has given us the Holy Spirit (v. 13), not as a temporary gift that will pass away, but as One who will abide with us to preserve and protect us.

APPLY THE WORD

Giving gifts is one way we show appreciation for those we love. Our gifts do not need to be expensive; a small thoughtful gift, especially when offered at an unexpected time, can be especially meaningful. Consider giving a small gift of appreciation to someone today—maybe even wrapping it up—and surprising that person.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Jonathan Armstrong serves as the director of the Center for Global Theological Education. Please pray that God will provide him and his team with many opportunities to use their gifts, training, and resources in His service.

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

3

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7

The Breath of Life

Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation, better known as CPR, dates to 1740 when the Paris Academy of Sciences officially recommended a mouth-to-mouth method of resuscitation for victims of drowning. But it did not gain popularity in the United States until endorsed by the military in 1957. In 1972, a man named Leonard Cobb began mass training efforts in Seattle, Wash., showing more than 100,000 people how to give the breath of life.

When God formed man from the very dust of the ground, He did something extraordinary. He breathed into Adam's nostrils "the breath of life" (v. 7). It was God's breath that transformed man into a "living being." What an amazing gift God gave at that moment: the gift of life. As Acts 17:28 says, "For in him we live and move and have our being."

The creation of human life was the finale of God's creative work. He had

formed the heavens and the earth "in all their vast array" (v. 1). His magnificent handiwork included the sun, moon, and stars. He had designed a multitude of living creatures and abundant foliage. But the creation of man and woman stands out among these creative acts as unique.

But the giving does not stop with life; God gives three additional gifts. First, Adam was given a vocation. He was placed in the Garden of Eden and given the task of caring for God's creation and naming each animal (vv. 15, 19). Second, Adam was given provision (and a warning): while he was allowed to eat from any tree in the garden, there was one from which he should not eat (v. 17). And third, he was given a companion, Eve (v. 18). Adam recognized this extraordinary gift when he said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (v. 23).

APPLY THE WORD

How is your thankful list going? As you consider the gifts God has given you, be sure to add the gift of life. Your very existence is dependent on God Himself. Thank God for the air that you breathe today and the magnificent life blood that runs through your body. You are indeed "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14).

PRAY WITH US

Include Dr. Bryan O'Neal in your prayers today. He serves as the VP and dean of Moody Bible Institute Distance Learning and as a professor of theology. May God provide him with insight and strength to handle the work set before him.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139:13–14

THURSDAY
APRIL
4

God Knows You

Pregnant mothers are given a fascinating chart detailing the stages of growth of their unborn child. For example, in Month 1, circulation begins and the tiny heart beats 65 times a minute. The baby is only about a quarter-inch long. In Month 2, the baby's facial features develop with little ears, fingers, toes, and eyes.

Today's psalm is a gift in itself—one of great comfort—as it details the intimate relationship we have with God, our Creator. As the psalmist says, "you know me" (v. 1). God knows you better than anyone else.

God knows your actions. He is intimately acquainted with what you do, day in and day out. "You know when I sit and when I rise" (v. 2). He knows when you leave your house and when you lie in bed at night asleep (v. 3). He knows your behaviors and the words you speak even before you utter them.

That knowledge should both comfort us and provide a reminder that God is watching. Nothing we do or say is hidden from Him!

We cannot escape His watch. There is nowhere we can travel or hide that will shield us from God's presence and awareness of our being. He is omniscient, all knowing. That quality can be disconcerting if we have something to hide but comforting when longing for His guidance and protection.

Verses 13 through 16 speak directly to our creation. God formed us in the womb (v. 13). Just as He was intimately involved in the creation of Adam and Eve, God was intimately involved in bringing you to life. You are a magnificent creation—"fearfully and wonderfully made" (v. 14)—as wonderful as any of His works. All of our days are written in God's book, even before we were born (v. 16).

APPLY THE WORD

If you are anxious, today's psalm should provide incredible comfort. We can trust our future, and every detail of our life, to the God who formed us and cares for us. He holds our future in His hands, and our days are written in His book "before one of them came to be" (v. 16). You can cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you.

PRAY WITH US

Today we ask that you remember our Bible faculty in your prayers. Thank God for Andrew Schmutzter, Benjamin Wilson, Eric Redmond, Ernest Gray, and Gerald Peterman. These professors have dedicated their lives to equipping the next generation for ministry!

FRIDAY
APRIL
5

I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

Genesis 17:6

An Unexpected Gift

What will you be doing when you are 99? While the average life expectancy has increased to 76 for men and 81 for women, most of us cannot begin to imagine what happens in today's passage. God appears to Abram, just before his 100th birthday, and tells him that he will be the "father of many nations" (v. 4).

God precedes that surprising announcement with a few statements. First, He declares that He is "God Almighty" (v. 1). The name *God Almighty* comes from the Hebrew *El-Shaddai*, meaning "sufficient" or "enough." Another definition suggests that we serve a "bountiful" or "exuberant" God. Before God makes this announcement to Abram, He reminds him that He is more than enough to supply Abram's needs and to give more than expected.

Second, He instructs Abram to "walk before me faithfully and be blameless"

(v. 2). Abram should continue to walk with God and follow Him. At age 99, his life was not over—God had plans to bless him with an extended family.

God gave Abram a new name, Abraham (v. 5). Sarai became Sarah (v. 15). Their new names marked this important moment, as God promised the unexpected, to make them the father and mother of "nations" (vv. 6, 16).

What an astonishing gift: to learn in their old age that they would receive what seemed impossible—the gift of a child. Their dream of one child was multiplied beyond their imagination. Notice the response of the couple to God's promise. In verse 17, Abraham fell down and laughed! Certainly this was a shocking and unbelievable promise. God does not work in ways we expect, but He is able and willing to bless us beyond our imagination.

APPLY THE WORD

Do you believe God can do big things, even beyond what you imagine? Abram and Sarai never expected that God would bless them with a child in their old age. Most of us tend to ask God only for things that seem realistic. Pray to the Lord God Almighty, *El Shaddai*, asking Him for the deepest desires of your heart. He is bountiful and sufficient!

PRAY WITH US

Again, will you pray for Moody's Bible faculty? Thank God for John Goodrich, Matthew Monkmeier, Michael Wechsler, Ronald Sauer, and Steven Sanchez. May they continue to faithfully train and equip students in the power of the Holy Spirit!

For in him we live and move and have our being.

Acts 17:28

SATURDAY
APRIL
6

The Gift of Knowing God

A great number of people today consider themselves agnostic, meaning they don't believe there is enough evidence to confirm or deny the existence of God. British philosopher Bertrand Russell explained the difference between a Christian, an atheist, and an agnostic: "The Christian holds that we can know there is a God; the atheist, that we can know there is not. The Agnostic suspends judgment, saying that there are not sufficient grounds either for affirmation or for denial."

The apostle Paul, in today's passage, addressed the people of Athens who considered themselves religious but did not believe in the Christian God. As the text notes: "the city was full of idols" (v. 16). Paul was attracting so much attention by talking about Jesus that a group approached him to ask for an explanation (v. 20).

Paul pointed to an altar in their midst with the inscription: To AN UNKNOWN GOD (v. 23). To the crowd gathered, Paul suggested they should know the true God they are worshiping. God, said Paul, is the Creator (v. 24). He made the world and everything in it. God does not need us to exist. In fact, the opposite is true: He gives us breath and life (v. 25). He shapes our lives and gives us purpose. He "marked out their appointed times" (v. 26).

God gives the extraordinary gift of life: "For in him we live and move and have our being" (v. 28). This view of God as our Creator changes how we see and worship Him. Paul said that since God has made Himself known to us, we have a responsibility to repent and follow Him. The response to Paul's sermon was mixed. Some "sneered" while others wanted to learn more (v. 32).

APPLY THE WORD

Each of us probably knows people who consider themselves atheists or agnostics. As God brings those friends or family members to your mind today, pray for them. Ask God to reveal Himself to them and to open their eyes to see His truth. Ask that He provide a way for you to share with them, just as Paul did, that you know who God is.

PRAY WITH US

Pray for Dr. Larry Davidhizar who serves as vice president and dean of faculty at Moody. May God provide him with wisdom and clarity as he oversees important academic decisions and cares for the faculty and students of Moody.

SUNDAY
APRIL

7

*He provides rain for the earth;
he sends water on the countryside.*

Job 5:10

The Gift of Abundant Creation

According to Charity Water, an organization whose mission is to provide clean water to people worldwide, 663 million people in the world live without clean water. That means 1 in every 10 people, or twice the population of the United States. Most live in rural areas. In Africa, women spend 40 billion hours every year walking to get water. Access to clean water gives them a more abundant life.

In today's passage, Job is wrestling with injustice for the turn his life has taken. His friend Eliphaz counseled him: "If I were you, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before him" (5:8). Why seek counsel with God during these most difficult moments of life? Because of the abundant character and nature of God.

God has shown His nature by performing miracles and wonders (5:9). He has demonstrated that He is the great provider who ensures life is sustained

on this Earth. How beautiful to consider that each raindrop is a gift from God (5:10). The water so many depend on for life has been given by the Creator.

Eliphaz also suggests that God's care extends beyond provision for the natural sustenance of creation. He also protects His people. Because God is in control, as the creator, giver, and protector of life, even "the poor have hope" (5:16).

Near the end of the book of Job, God's nature is described further. Chapter 37 says we should "listen to the roar of his voice" (v. 2). God is depicted as a mighty force unleashing lightning and thunder (vv. 3, 4). He commands the snow and determines the rain that falls. God's power, as well as His love and care, are revealed in the natural world that He created and controls. This passage finishes with a reminder that the very water of the earth shows God's love (v. 13).

APPLY THE WORD

We often take God's gifts, His provision for us, for granted. Today, let's focus on water. Every time you take a drink of water, turn on the faucet, wash a dish, or take a shower, thank and praise God. We often focus on what we don't have instead of on what God has given. Let's thank Him today for water and the way He sustains us.

PRAY WITH US

Mollie Bond has filled many vital roles at Moody and currently serves on the Foundations and Corporate Relations team. May she experience God's leading as she reaches out to Christian organizations and ministries.

*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.*

Psalm 33:6

MONDAY
APRIL
8

Filling the Earth with Unfailing Love

Astronauts in space are often awestruck by their first lofty view of the Earth. Neil Armstrong, the first human to walk on the Moon, said, “It suddenly struck me that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn’t feel like a giant. I felt very, very small.”

In today’s psalm, the author is awestruck not by his view of earth but by his vision of God our Creator. Here we are told to “sing joyfully,” to “praise,” and “make music” (vv. 1–2). We are to offer God our very best singing and we are to play instruments skillfully. We were created to praise Him. Verse 4 explains why: “For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.” Our singing is the perfect response to God.

In creation we see the faithfulness of God. Like the astronauts, we are

often awed by the beauty we see around us in the skies, oceans, and mountains. And how astounding that all of this was spoken into place (v. 6)! The knowledge that God could “breathe” the world into being inspires reverence. God is powerful. Whatever He commands is obeyed (v. 9).

The psalmist also rejoices that we have been given an intimate and loving relationship with God. He is not only a powerful Creator but He also knows everything we do (v. 15). Praise, then, is the only appropriate response. The earth is filled with His goodness.

While His nature is evident for all to see, many choose not to acknowledge Him. What an encouragement to sing with gusto our praise of God, the creator and sustainer of life who has chosen to love and know us!

APPLY THE WORD

Let’s join the psalmist today and “sing joyfully” to our Lord and Savior (v. 1). Perhaps you prefer to sing alone in the car or in the shower. Maybe you can join with others and sing a simple hymn before dinner or listen to one of your favorite praise songs and sing along. No matter how or when, give God the honor and glory He deserves!

PRAY WITH US

Would you pray for Mark Wagner, Moody’s chief operating officer and executive vice president? Moody has operated and ministered successfully over the years due to faithful and talented servants of God like Mark.

TUESDAY
APRIL

9

The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.

Psalm 65:9

God Fills and Feeds Us

For centuries, people have celebrated the beginning and the end of harvest season by offering thanks to God for His provision. Churches would hold a special service titled *Lammas*, during which farmers brought loaves of bread from their first crop to use during the Communion service. Together they offered thanks to God for the harvest.

In today's psalm, the author gives thanks to God for the land and for everything that grows on it. The nation of Israel was an agricultural society. Everything in their lives rotated around the production of the land. The author acknowledges that while the people might work the land, God is the ultimate provider.

Notice the repetition of the word *you* throughout this psalm, referring to God. "You care for the land and water it," "you drench its furrows," "you soften it with showers" (vv. 9, 10). People in the fields, working under the hot sun, were mindful

that none of this would exist without the care and provision of God Himself. They had grain because God "ordained it" (v. 9). Verse 11 speaks of the bounty and abundance of God's provision. The word *bounty* in Hebrew is also used to denote blessing or benefit. A king's table is described as bountiful—not only lavish but also blessing those who feast there. The word *bounty* has the connotation of generosity and is used in Scripture to emphasize the incredible generosity of God. We are not given meager portions; we are given an abundance of provision because we are children of God.

The author compares the provision of God to being clothed. The earth is carefully adorned by God; the hills are "clothed," the meadows are covered by the "flocks," and even the valleys are "mantled" with grain (vv. 12–13). The earth is dressed to its finest with God's gift to us, the bounty of His blessing.

APPLY THE WORD

Have you ever stopped to thank God in the grocery store? Maybe we need to offer a moment of thanksgiving over our shopping carts! We often act like the items in our pantry came about by our own effort. We forget that everything we have is ultimately provided by the Lord of the harvest. Today, thank God for His abundant gift to you.

PRAY WITH US

Today, will you remember Moody's Campus Post Office in your prayers? Thank God for its staff—Anthony Harper, Brenda McLemore, Bryant Rueda, and Nga Tran—who benefit Moody's whole campus by providing efficient and timely mail delivery.

*Then the LORD said to Moses,
“I will rain down bread from heaven for you.”*

Exodus 16:4

WEDNESDAY
APRIL
10

Food from Heaven

If you or someone you love served in the military, you may be familiar with the acronym MRE, “Meal, Ready to Eat.” In 1963, the Department of Defense began developing a food ration that would utilize modern food preparation technology to create a lighter version of canned goods. The dehydrated meals are stored in pouches and accompanied by a flameless heater that allows meals to be prepared and served no matter the conditions.

For the Israelites, finding daily rations was becoming increasingly difficult. Having fled Egypt, their supplies were running low. Time spent on the journey meant that what was left was probably inedible. How could they continue without nourishment? God took notice when the Israelites grumbled.

There is no doubt that God heard His people, for He appeared to them in a cloud. He informed

Moses that He would supply their needs with quail in the evening and manna in the morning (v. 12). The manna, a sweet, honey-like grain, would carpet the desert floor each morning and could then be ground into fresh bread. What an amazing gift from God!

God also gave a few restrictions. First, they were not to hoard the supplies, keeping extra for themselves. Rather they were to believe that God would be faithful and that He would daily supply their needs—which He did for 40 years (v. 35). If they kept extra, it would become infested with maggots and rot (v. 20). Of course some did not listen, did not trust God, and hid supplies. The second rule was that they were not to gather manna on the Sabbath. We must understand God’s faithfulness. He can and does meet the needs of His people. He is reliable and true.

APPLY THE WORD

Yesterday we thanked God over our pantry or shopping cart; today let’s thank Him while preparing a meal for His faithful provision. Consider the worries you currently face about tomorrow. The God who supplied the Israelites with daily meals for 40 years can care for your concerns. Trust Him with those today.

PRAY WITH US

Again, we lift up to God our Campus Post Office staff: Richard Tatina, Samuel Ramos, and Victor Perez. We are thankful for this team’s Christlike attitude, despite handling a great deal of mail and busy days at the office.

THURSDAY
APRIL

11

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Matthew 6:26

The Gift of Daily Provision

Stacey Utecht, a Moody alumna, gave up her job to follow God's leading. This meant financial risk, but God provided. "Yesterday, my pastor shared how God provides for His people. Today, I had friends in town visiting. Before we parted, they put an envelope in my pocket saying they wanted to bless me. When they pulled away, I saw it was \$1,000. God saw my need and was extravagant in meeting it. I share this to encourage you if you are also in need. God is able!"

Today's passage addresses worries we face on a daily basis about our finances and other needs. The word *therefore* means you should look at what came before. Earlier in Matthew 6, Jesus teaches His disciples the Lord's Prayer, reminds them to store up treasure in heaven (v. 19), and calls them to serve God rather than money (v. 24). Why does Jesus turn our attention from prayer to worry? The earlier verses remind us to

keep an eternal mindset. While we live and work in this world, we are citizens of heaven. While we share the same concerns as our neighbors, we can be certain of the Lord's care and a guaranteed eternal future.

"Therefore" we should not worry (v. 25). God, our faithful provider, values us and will provide for us. Just like the Israelites, we tend to forget this truth. We believe we are in control and responsible for our own destiny. This passage reminds us that God will provide down to the smallest detail.

Verse 28 asks: "Why do you worry about clothes?" God is concerned about what you eat, drink, and wear! God as our Father knows what we need and will provide. Rather than let our heart worry about temporary needs, we are to shift our focus to "his kingdom and his righteousness" (v. 33). This alone is an antidote to worry.

APPLY THE WORD

Writing down your worries is one way to relieve stress. Today, take a moment to make a list of the worries on your mind, whether small or large. Then, use this list to pray, giving each worry to God. Not only does He care for you, but He alone holds your future. Tell your heavenly Father the concerns weighing down your heart.

PRAY WITH US

Ken Heulitt is Moody's chief financial officer who oversees many vital financial decisions that affect the media and education branches at Moody Bible Institute. May God bless Ken and his team with wisdom and discernment in their work.

*Command those who are rich . . .
not to be arrogant nor to put their hope
in wealth . . . but to put their hope in God.*

1 Timothy 6:17

FRIDAY
APRIL
12

Our Abundant Provider

Although the chances of winning the lottery are more remote than getting struck by lightning, millions of Americans regularly purchase tickets for the chance to claim a windfall of cash. Even more surprising is the number of winners who have discovered that being suddenly wealthy does not guarantee happiness.

Today's passage reminds us that concentrating our efforts on being rich in this lifetime is misguided for the believer. In fact, we are to "flee" from that way of thinking. We are instructed instead to pursue "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness" (v. 11). Paul is not necessarily saying that being wealthy is wrong; rather, he suggests that the problem lies in the "love of money" (v. 10). We are not to fixate our efforts on wealth.

The reason Paul rejects a love of money for the believer is that it shifts our focus away from who we are in Christ.

Everything we have belongs to God. When we are connected to God, we realize He alone is our provider. God not only ensures that we have our basic necessities of food and clothing but so "richly" provides for us that we also experience "enjoyment" (v. 17). We find joy in putting the things of God above the things of this world!

Recognizing this abundance from God motivates us to be generous. Rather than setting our sights on acquiring an enormous bank balance, we share whatever we have been given with others. Our treasure is really not ours at all! We are citizens not on this earth but of heaven (v. 19).

Our pursuit of godliness should be combined with a deep sense of gratitude and contentment for what God has given. By recognizing our eternal purpose, we will have a healthy attitude toward our earthly possessions.

APPLY THE WORD

Generosity reflects the heart of God! Paul challenges us to be content in what we have and to give generously to others. Consider a way you can apply this truth today. Perhaps you can give money or your time to help someone in need. Why not contact your church or a local ministry to find out if there is a need you are able to fill?

PRAY WITH US

As you pray today, please include the names of Alice Leighton-Armah, Annita Smith, Eunice Childress, and Michael Duong in the Controller's Office. Thank God for their diligence, attention to detail, and financial expertise!

SATURDAY
APRIL

13

*You, LORD, keep my lamp burning;
my God turns my darkness into light.*

Psalm 18:28

God Is Our Faithful Provider

If you've ever seen the sun rise over the ocean, you know it is breathtaking. Over the darkness of the horizon, you see a tiny pinpoint of light. Then, steadily and surely, the light rises and the point becomes a circle. The entire sky is transformed by this fireball of light. People often burst into spontaneous applause at the sight of a sunrise. What a magnificent reminder of God's daily provision.

While today we are focusing only on the first portion of Psalm 18, the entire psalm celebrates God's faithfulness. The first verse sums up the Psalm: "I love you, LORD, my strength." David had been delivered from his enemies and from Saul, whose intent was to take his life. Here David sings praise to God, who consistently comes to his rescue.

David's situation was so severe that he teetered on the brink of death. Note the poetic description he uses,

as death entangles, overwhelms and confronts him (vv. 4–5). When we face significant trials, it can certainly feel like the problems take on a life or character of their own. But those problems pale in the face of the mighty God, our redeemer and rescuer. David believes God can and will rescue him. When believers pray, God hears and reacts (vv. 6–10). God does not sit passively by and ignore our call. He takes dramatic action against David's enemies and rescues the one He loves: "he rescued me because he delighted in me" (v. 19).

David's reference to the Lord as the one who keeps his lamp burning has special significance in that culture. In the days before electricity, light depended on oil lamps. Without oil, the lamp would not burn, and the owner would be left in complete darkness (see 2 Kings 4). God is a faithful provider. He is always listening, always faithful, and always supplying our needs.

APPLY THE WORD

When we are in distress, we often turn to our family or friends to share our grief or anxiety. David reminds us that we should first and foremost cry out to God. He is faithful! He provides light for each day, and He cares deeply for us. Praise God for His faithful provision. Even as the sun rises each day, God will be present for us.

PRAY WITH US

Please pray again for the Controller's Office, adding Linda Wahr, Marya Preston, Robert Jones, and Roger Sipes to your list. May the Lord encourage them with His love and care as they study the Bible together during their department devotions.

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

1 Kings 4:29

SUNDAY
APRIL
14

A King's Request

In the story of Aladdin, a young man finds a mysterious and tarnished golden lamp. When he rubs it, a genie appears, granting him three wishes. In that moment, Aladdin's world is changed because he has the ability to receive whatever his heart desires.

Maybe you have wondered what you would request if you had the opportunity to receive anything your heart desired. In today's passage, God gave King Solomon the opportunity to make such a request. His answer may surprise you: Solomon asked for wisdom.

Solomon was now king, taking over from David his father. The people he would lead were "as numerous as the dust of the earth" (2 Chron. 1:9). Surely the prospect of this responsibility was daunting, so Solomon asked: "Give me wisdom and knowledge" (2 Chron. 2:10). Wisdom is referred to throughout Scripture, and it is not just another word

for knowledge. Wisdom is marked by obedience to God. "Wisdom makes one wise person more powerful than ten rulers in a city" (Eccl. 7:19). Knowledge refers to the accumulation of facts. As one person said, if you have knowledge but no wisdom, you are merely a walking encyclopedia. While knowledge might help you win at the game Trivial Pursuit, wisdom brings discernment and helps put knowledge into action.

God granted Solomon's request: "wisdom and knowledge will be given you" (2 Chron. 1:12). But God also gave the new king unprecedented wealth, possessions, and honor: 1,400 chariots, 12,000 horses. Gold and silver were "as common in Jerusalem as stones" (2 Chron. 1:15). The request for wisdom was met with great pleasure by God. It was an indication (at least in the beginning) that this king not only wanted to rule but that He wanted to follow God.

APPLY THE WORD

Today ask God for wisdom. Ask Him to direct your path and guide your steps. Ask Him to help you make the best choices and decisions for your future, and even for your day. Before you step into any confusing situation, take a moment to pray for God's wisdom. Just as He granted King Solomon's request for wisdom, He can grant yours today.

PRAY WITH US

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, will be grateful for your prayer support today. Ask the Lord to guide his efforts and bless the fruit of his ministry at Moody. May many know the love of the Lord because of Greg's faithful work.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Dr. Rosalie de Rosset, Professor of Communications and Literature

Q Many have debated the reality of hell. Will God release those who do not believe in our Lord Jesus Christ? And what about those who practice humanitarianism? They aren't mean people; they just don't practice Christianity.

A The biblical answer to your question as to whether God will "release those who do not believe in our Lord Jesus Christ" is yes, and that includes everyone who does not believe in the reality of personal sin and in the truth of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection to atone for sin before a holy God. The watering down of the doctrine of eternal punishment occurs not because of some newfound understanding of Scripture. Instead, it is the result of minimizing the doctrine to satisfy the current desire for a user-friendly theology, to accommodate people's feelings, rather than insisting on an absolute standard. It also shows a diminished understanding of the holiness of God, a holiness that should inspire awe in us and fill us with caution. One of my theology teachers in seminary once said, "It matters to God what we do and what we believe."

To illustrate, as a teacher, I have a standard I expect from my students because I care that they be well-educated and responsible individuals.

It's because I care that I judge their work as less than worthy if it is irresponsible or substandard. A student's niceness or generosity is not the issue. The standard is.

The familiar verses in John 3:16–18 are plain: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

Q Someone asked the question in our Bible study group about the kind of body the believer would have in heaven if she died right now. She expected to take her current physical body to heaven with her as Jesus did at His ascension. The teacher agreed. Is this correct?

A We know from Scripture that Jesus Christ is the "first fruits" of those who have died (1 Cor. 15: 20, 23), so He is the example of what will happen to those who believe. Thomas touched the physical body of Christ after He was resurrected (John 20:27). Furthermore, Job said that "in my flesh I will see God" (Job 19:26).

Gratitude is a discipline of the spirit that we must cultivate and practice.

The answer depends on what is meant by “current.” If your teacher means that we will have the same body, she is right. When our bodies are resurrected, there will be no discontinuity between our bodies and our resurrected selves. This comes as a profound comfort to those who have lost family and friends. We will know each other. Paul writes that “the dead will be raised imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:52). Our bodies are an integral part of our identity. If, however, by “current” your teacher means the body is resurrected in the state that it is on earth, she is wrong. How depressing it would be if our bodies were resurrected with all the marks of aging, sickness, weakness, or other flaws that come with being human. That’s what the word *imperishable* means, followed by the assertion that “we will be changed.” Imperishable means, first of all, “honorable, trustworthy, good, virtuous,” and in a second definition, “not subject to death or decay.” Paul is declaring that both the characters and the bodies of believers will be perfected.

Q **When I look at the story of the ten lepers whom Jesus healed in Luke 17:11–19, I wonder how nine of those lepers could have been so ungrateful and thoughtless since they had been delivered from so much. How could they not even think to come back?**

A Probably many of us have wondered the same thing. How often have we in our relief after an answer to prayer just kept going without acknowledging the wonder of what happened? We give ourselves so many reasons for failing to say thank you. In fact, we are living in a time when writing thank-you notes even for things like wedding gifts or generous financial, emotional, or physical help is the exception, not the rule.

A friend who has been in cancer treatment puts it this way, “While I’m thankful I finished my last treatment and that my doctor says I’m in remission, I find I want more instead of focusing on being thankful. I want to be back to normal; I want my hair and my eyelashes and my eyebrows back. I want my fingers and toes to no longer be numb. I want to be doing my responsibilities like I used to. I want to feel energetic. I want, I want.” She summarizes her thoughts about that story by asking two questions: “Do you think the lepers had been beaten down so long that once they experienced some normalcy, they rushed to enter real life quickly? Is it possible they were thankful in their hearts but forgot to practice it in the moment?” Of course we don’t know. What we do know is simple but profound: Gratitude is a discipline of the spirit that we must cultivate and practice.

MONDAY
APRIL

15

*To the person who pleases him,
God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness.*

Ecclesiastes 2:26

The Gift of Wisdom

King Solomon was the third king of Israel. Known for his incredible wealth and power, Solomon reigned for 40 years during one of the most prosperous times in Israel's history. According to Scripture, "The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones" (2 Chron. 1:15). Solomon was known for his extravagant lifestyle, taking 700 wives and 300 concubines. He is credited for the building of a lavish palace and the temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. But perhaps most of all Solomon was renowned for his wisdom, which we learned yesterday was a gift (at his request) from God.

According to rabbinic tradition, Solomon penned the dismal reflections in the book of Ecclesiastes in his old age. This may be especially shocking, considering the source: "So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me" (v. 17).

Ecclesiastes repeats the theme that life "under the sun" is vanity. By acquiring everything commonly desired by humanity, the writer learned that bounty does not equal happiness. Both the rich and the poor meet a common end. No amount of wealth or possessions guarantees happiness. Even accomplishments, of which he had many, did not produce joy (v. 19).

Notice how many times the word *meaningless* is used. Again and again, Ecclesiastes reaches the same conclusion. The one who is wise, seeing life through a godly lens, can view the end result of earthly labor. It will not produce eternal results. The key verse and the hope is found in verse 25. Without God, "who can eat or find enjoyment?" God is key to life's purpose. It is not enough to work hard, to chase pleasure, or even to achieve greatness. Rather, a life spent pointed toward God will bring wisdom and happiness (v. 26).

APPLY THE WORD

Too often we fill our days with what Ecclesiastes would call "chasing after the wind." Wisdom encourages us to look at life differently. What will count for eternity? What are you passionate about that will produce fruit for the kingdom? This is a challenge for us, not just for today, but throughout our life: to chase not after the wind but after God.

PRAY WITH US

Food Service provides meals for students, faculty, and staff in The Commons, Moody's cafeteria. We thank God for the nutritious food prepared and served by its staff: Louis Ballasch, Lillie Hill, and Todd Sacco.

You are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God.

1 Corinthians 1:30

TUESDAY
APRIL
16

The Value of Wisdom

When David was chosen by God to be Israel's king, he was not the obvious pick. The prophet Samuel was sent to the family of Jesse. At first glance, Samuel thought God would want Jesse's oldest son, Eliab. Samuel said, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD" (1 Sam. 16:6). But God did not. "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:6–7).

In today's passage, Paul says, "Think of what you were when you were called" (v. 26). Most of us were probably not notable according to the world's standards. We were not born into wealthy families. We might not claim a huge social following or have achieved multiple degrees that mark our intelligence.

But God does not choose His children because of their outward appearance or status: "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise" (v. 27). What does this have to do with the gift of wisdom? Paul is reminding us that God's wisdom and His way of thinking do not align with our own. What the world admires is not the same as what God holds valuable. In our connection to Christ, being made new, we have been given access to His divine wisdom. Through Christ, we are made right with God and set apart. We are holy!

If we are to boast of anything in this world, we are not to boast of our wealth, degrees, or popularity. Our value is based solely on our connection to Jesus. In Christ, we are chosen and given wisdom, confidence, and a certain future.

APPLY THE WORD

Thank God today for the precious gift of wisdom given to us through Christ. What circumstance are you facing that needs God's gift of wisdom? Today, ask Him to help you see the way through and make wise decisions. Pray, knowing that you will definitely receive it! God's wisdom will be given to you. He always desires the best for us.

PRAY WITH US

As you pray today, thank God for the work of Bruce Everhart, VP of Donor Development and Channel Strategy at Moody. We are grateful for his skill in caring for friends who financially support Moody and for effectively managing his team.

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

17

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

Romans 5:8

The Gift of God's Love

Talifolau Veikoso survived five heart attacks by age 39. In 2016, he became the recipient of a donor heart. “I got a second chance,” said Veikoso.

“Without that donor heart, I wouldn’t be here. It’s the best gift anyone can have.” A single organ donor has the potential to save up to eight lives and transform as many as 100. The beautiful gift of organ donation saves the lives of thousands of people every year.

In today’s passage, we are reminded of an even greater gift. God gave us the incredible gift of His love. He gave the life of His Son, Jesus Christ, so we could live. There is an urgency to this gift. Just like a donor heart arriving when a patient is about to die, God’s gift came “at just the right time” (v. 6).

Consider the fact that rarely will anyone willingly give up their life for another person. Yet, while we were

undeserving in our sin, rebellious “enemies” of God (v. 10), Christ gave His life for us (v. 8).

This undeserved gift of God’s love rescues, saves, and transforms us. As the passage explains, we existed in a state of death since Adam. Through the fateful act of Adam and Eve, sin came to all people, and therefore we were all condemned. Sin is the common denominator of humanity, the common ailment of us all. No one is exempt (Rom. 3:10).

The good news is that God provided an incredible gift of salvation through His Son. We didn’t have to become good enough to deserve God’s love. It was freely given to us. Every sinner can receive “God’s abundant provision” through Jesus Christ (v. 17). “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (v. 8).

APPLY THE WORD

Have you received this gift? God’s gift of His Son Jesus Christ will transform your heart and save your life. It is a gift that is offered freely. You do not need to do anything to earn it. Pray to God today asking Him to forgive your sins. Trust in Him as your Savior and accept His gift of love, forgiveness, redemption, and salvation today.

PRAY WITH US

Join us in prayer today for Moody Radio’s administration team. Thank God for the diligent service of Elsa Mazón, Lucrecia Lopez, Maureen Ber, Scott Krus, and Tinakka Johnson. May their radio ministry bring glory to God!

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.
His love endures forever.*

Psalm 136:1

THURSDAY
APRIL
18

God's Love Never Fails

What lasts forever? You may be hard-pressed to think of anything that matches that description. But today we know of one thing that is never-ending: God's love. In today's passage, the same phrase is repeated 26 times: "His love endures forever." Again and again, the chorus reinforces the central thought: God's love will never fail us. This gift of God's love will never end.

This psalm or song is divided into distinct sections. You can recognize the pattern by looking for areas of repetition. For example, in verses 1 through 3, we see the character and person of God. The identity of God as not only "a god" but "God of gods" and "Lord of lords" enables us to trust His promises (vv. 2–3). We worship a God who will never go back on His word.

The second section focuses on God as Creator (vv. 4–9). This is a God who made the heavens and the oceans. He

placed the sun in the sky and lit the night sky with the moon and stars (vv. 7–9). The same God whose outstretched hand formed the universe promises to love us. "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him" (Ps. 103:11). The expansiveness of creation reminds us that God's love for us endures forever.

The third section focuses on the history of God's relationship with His people (vv. 10–24). We see specific times when God delivered His people from danger, guided them through difficulties, and eliminated their enemies. He gave them the Promised Land as inheritance (v. 21).

The final verses return to the gift of provision. God does not forget those whom He has given life. He provides for "every creature" and nourishes us. His love endures forever! To the Giver of the very best gifts, we should respond with thanks.

APPLY THE WORD

Today's psalm provides a wonderful way to celebrate the gift of God's love for us. First, thank God for His character. Second, reflect on who He is as exhibited by the beauty and vastness of creation. Third, thank Him for guiding and protecting you. And finally, thank God for His eternal love: "His love endures forever."

PRAY WITH US

Praise God today for the service of Moody Radio's vice president, Doug Hastings. God uses his diligent and discerning leadership to enable Moody Radio to keep sharing Christ-centered content with listeners across the globe.

FRIDAY
APRIL
19

This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1 John 4:10

How Great a Love

According to the book and movie *Love Story*, “love means never having to say you’re sorry.” A chart-topping pop song declares “love hurts.” If popular entertainment is any indication, we are obsessed with love. One researcher asserted that 60 percent of songs in the modern era were devoted to the subject of love and relationships.

Today’s passage defines love from God’s perspective. John explains that being loved by God shapes our behavior. John says love can be a gauge to reveal if you know or do not know God. If your life is marked by hate and disgust for others, it indicates that you do not fully understand God’s love. God demonstrated His love to us through His Son Jesus, and by sending Him into the world as an “atoning sacrifice” to pay for our sins (v. 10).

We were not deserving of that gift. This act of God’s love should produce

results in our own lives. It should change the way we act toward others. God’s love “is made complete in us” (v. 12). This does not mean that God’s love is lacking but that others can more fully experience God’s love through us. When God’s love changes our hearts and behaviors, others get a glimpse of who He is and how He loves. Certainly, this should affect the way we live.

Fear has no part in love (v. 18). The atoning sacrifice of Christ has removed fear from our lives. We no longer fear judgment. We can face the future without fear of failure. Finally, we are only able to love because we have been given the supreme example. “We love because he first loved us” (v. 19). As God’s children, we should reflect through our lives what He has modeled so clearly for us.

APPLY THE WORD

Let today’s words sink deep into your heart: You are fully and completely loved. No matter how undeserving you feel, God sees you and loves you. This gift is completely undeserved. We did nothing to earn it, yet it was freely given. And God’s love is life changing! Relish the gift of His love for you.

PRAY WITH US

Will you pray for Moody Radio’s programming team: Chris Papendick, Daniel Anderson, Dan Craig, Danielle Kerschhackl, and Deborah Solomon? Thank God for their contribution to the creation and development of Moody Radio’s programs.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

SATURDAY
APRIL
20

The Gift of God's Son

The television game show *Jeopardy* has been on the air since 1964 and hosted for the past 30 years by Alex Trebek. To win, contestants are given an answer and must come up with the corresponding question. In today's passage, Jesus and Nicodemus, a member of the ruling religious leaders, have a private session of questions and answers. Their conversation centers on one key question that even Nicodemus, an esteemed religious teacher, could not answer: "How can someone be born when they are old?" (v. 4).

Nicodemus was right. Physically, such a thing is impossible. But Jesus was pushing Nicodemus to understand deep spiritual truth. In a sense, they were having two different discussions: one based on the truth of earth, the other based on "heavenly things" (v. 12). Jesus was pointing Nicodemus to spiritual truth: through Him would come eternal life.

One of the most well known verses in the Bible, John 3:16, appears in the context of this conversation. First, God loved the world. This includes Nicodemus and it includes you. God's gift of love exemplified through the gift of His "one and only Son." Through the gift of Jesus, God has provided a way of salvation. Whoever believes in Jesus will be born again; they will not perish but receive eternal life. We are born again spiritually and resurrected bodily at Christ's second coming.

Although we do not hear the end of this conversation, we know that Nicodemus' life was forever changed. In John 19:38–42, we see Nicodemus again, this time to bury Jesus and to wrap His body with myrrh and aloë. What Jesus had explained to Nicodemus had now come true. God's love had provided a way for Nicodemus and for us to be born again.

APPLY THE WORD

We all have questions about the things of God. Nicodemus asked Jesus the questions that were troubling his heart. And by asking, Nicodemus discovered truth. Never hesitate to ask difficult questions of God. But as we ask, we need to pray that our mind and our heart will be open to His truth. We believe in a God who holds the answers.

PRAY WITH US

Please continue to pray with us for Moody Radio's programming team: Jon Gauger, Judy Kron, Kurt Goff, and Stephen Johnson. They work hard to ensure that Moody Radio has quality content to share with the world. May God bless their ministry!

SUNDAY
APRIL
21

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:23

The Gift of Eternal Life

As we celebrate Easter Sunday, let's examine how the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ make possible God's gift of eternal life. In the words of the apostle Paul, this was certainly an "indescribable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). The fact that God would give His own Son to die on our behalf is unimaginable. How could we, as sinners, ever deserve such a gift? The fact is: we don't! Paul reminds us of the severity of the consequences of our sin and the amazing gift we have been given. We must never take this gift for granted.

The beginning of the passage focuses on the temptation to believe that since our sin has been paid in full, we can live however we please. But we are not to treat salvation like a "get out of jail free" card in the classic Monopoly game. Salvation does not mean freedom to live any way we please.

Notice Paul's exclamation: "By no means!" (v. 2). As a believer, we enter into the death of Christ. We declare ourselves dead with Him so we can share in His resurrection (v. 5). As our old self is crucified, we end our allegiance to our sinful nature, eliminating its control over us (v. 7). Through Jesus, we are given freedom not only from the consequences of sin but also from sin itself! We are no longer enslaved to sin's power.

Paul talks about breaking the habit of being a slave to sin. Instead, we are to refocus our obedience on righteousness. His use of the phrase "the pattern of teaching" emphasizes that we are to follow a new pattern with our lives, forming new habits as a result of Christ's transformation. This indescribable gift has a transforming effect on those who accept it.

APPLY THE WORD

Have you accepted the gift of eternal life? Today's verse is a beautiful depiction of this indescribable gift of God, "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 23). As you worship this Easter Sunday, take time to thank God for this incredible gift, and if you've never accepted Christ as your Savior, there is no better time than today!

PRAY WITH US

As we pray together this Easter, will you join us in asking God to reveal himself to many around the world? May they also experience the new life this holiday symbolizes, and may we boldly share the joy of knowing the Lord and His love!

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8

MONDAY
APRIL
22

Made Alive in Christ

In our passage today, Paul tells an upside-down story. In an ordinary biography, the author begins by telling when the subject was born. We read about how the person grew up and note the key accomplishments. Finally, we learn how and when the person died. Here, Paul tells our story, but it is told in reverse. We were dead in sin but have been made alive in Christ (vv. 1, 5).

There is no in-between. If you are not made alive in Christ, you are “dead in your transgressions and sins” (v. 1). Those who are dead in transgressions and sins do not operate under God’s guidelines. They follow their own desires and satisfy their own cravings. Whether they realize it or not, they follow “the ruler of the kingdom of the air,” which is the Devil or Satan. In this condition, we deserve God’s wrath.

We are cut off from Him and spiritually dead.

Can the dead rescue themselves? Certainly not! Paul describes the incredible gift of God, a miracle that brings to life what was dead. While we were still dead, God loved us and made us alive in Christ. This removes any notion that we can earn our salvation or do anything to make God think we are worthy. Twice in this passage Paul declares, “it is by grace you have been saved” (vv. 5, 8).

Giving credit to God means realizing we are not in control of our own destiny. God loved us when we were still dead in our sins. He paid the penalty and raised us with Christ. It is only because of this transforming gift that we, who have been given life, can do good works through God’s power.

APPLY THE WORD

When you accept Christ as your Savior, you are a miracle! You have been brought to life! Today, thank God for His incredible gift. And if you have never accepted this gift, do so today. As we reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and His glorious resurrection, thank God that He willingly paid the penalty for our sin.

PRAY WITH US

Join us in prayer today for the Satellite Network Operations team. They work behind the scenes to keep Moody Radio on air. Thank God for the work of Andrew Dhuse, Sam Beirut, Benjamin Fredricks, and David Woodworth.

TUESDAY

APRIL

23

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:4

The Gift of Grace

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound / That saved a wretch like me. / I once was lost, but now am found / was blind, but now I see.” The words of this famous hymn were penned by John Newton. In the mid-1700s, Newton worked on a slave vessel and was described as the most profane man the captain had ever met. During a storm, Newton advised his fellow sailors to tie themselves to the ship to avoid being washed overboard. He begged God for mercy. God found him in his wretched state and redeemed him. Newton experienced the gift of God’s grace.

Grace is the unmerited favor of God. We were once condemned because of our sin, but we are now saved by God’s grace (see Rom. 3:24). We did nothing to merit this act of mercy from God. We did not prove ourselves good enough

in any way. We could not even lift one finger to save ourselves.

God’s grace provides a way. In our text today, Paul thanks God for the grace that saved the church in Corinth and brought them together as the body of Christ. We are joint recipients of this grace, united by this act of divine mercy, a gift we all share. And this grace produces results. Paul says by grace, we are enriched in every way, including our speech and the way we think (v. 5). Grace produces changes in our lives that are visible to others.

And grace will see us home! “He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 8). Not one of us could appear blameless before God without this amazing gift of grace!

APPLY THE WORD

The words to “Amazing Grace” may be familiar to you. If not, find a copy of this treasured hymn and pray over it today as you seek God. Thank Him for His gift of grace, completely undeserved yet so treasured. And rest in the assurance that He is enough. He has given you unmerited, undeserved favor, and He will keep you blameless to the end.

PRAY WITH US

Today let’s keep praying for the Satellite Network Operations team: Jose Lemus, Phil Shppard, Rodney Simon, and Thomas Svoboda. Their ministry helps bring the truth of the Bible to listeners who tune in to Moody Radio.

*There are different kinds of gifts,
but the same Spirit distributes them.*

1 Corinthians 12:4

WEDNESDAY
APRIL
24

The Gifts of the Spirit

Have you ever opened a gift so perfectly chosen for you that it brought you to tears? Maybe it was a gift you received as a child—something you longed for—or a gift given to you as an adult that demonstrated how well your loved one knew you.

In today's passage, we celebrate the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit. The word used for spiritual gifts is *charisma*, the Greek word for "gift." It is similar to the word *charis*, which means "grace" in Greek. Grace (*charis*) is God's gift given to us for our salvation; and *charisma*, the gift of the Spirit, is used not to save us but to enable us to edify others. Both are freely given and life changing!

Our spiritual gifts are given to us by God and individually selected. For additional reading on spiritual gifts, see Romans 12:6–8 and Ephesians 4. In these passages, we see that our

spiritual gifts are important to the body of Christ. God uses your gifts "for the common good" (v. 7) to build His church.

The primary spiritual gift that Christians receive is the Holy Spirit, who empowers us for ministry. He enables all believers to serve God in a variety of contexts and ways. The Holy Spirit works in supernatural ways and also enables us to use our natural abilities for God's glory.

The gift of the Spirit's indwelling is given to us at conversion. As we mature in our faith and grow in our experience of serving God, He enables us to recognize these gifts and use them to build up the church for the glory of God. To begin exploring how God has gifted you, ask the following: What do I enjoy doing? What ministry in my life does God seem to be blessing? What gifts do others see in me?

APPLY THE WORD

If you would like to understand more about the Holy Spirit and your gifts, we suggest these resources from Moody Publishers: *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit* by Merrill F. Unger and an ebook *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* by Rene Pache. These are available from the Moody Publishers website or your favorite book retailer.

PRAY WITH US

Please include Debbi Zelinski, Moody's VP of Human Resources, in your prayer time today. Her leadership in strategic and operational planning helps Moody to steward the skills and talents of our faculty and staff in a way that honors God.

THURSDAY
APRIL

25

*Now you are the body of Christ,
and each one is a part of it.*

1 Corinthians 12:27

The Gift of Unity

The human body is a complex, intricate system. The basic parts include the head, neck, torso, arms, and legs. But that is only the beginning. There are five vital organs: brain, heart, kidneys, liver, and lungs. We have 650 muscles that help our body move, 206 bones, 78 organs, and 30 to 37 trillion cells. Each part works together to make our body function.

Paul compares the church to the physical body. Each member plays an important part, and the church would not be the same if you and I were not in it. You are a gift to the church! As different as we each may be, we are created to work together, grow, worship, and serve. This unity, given through the Spirit, is a wonderful gift of God.

Being made new in Christ and baptized in the same Spirit enables diverse individuals to form one new body. Paul highlights two divisive issues in his

culture: the mistrust between Jews and Gentiles and the division between slaves and free people. In Christ, even these extremely divided groups of people become one (v. 13).

Diversity of the members is a gift to the church. We should be thankful we are not all hands or feet or eyes; “there are many parts” (v. 20). Differences within the body of Christ should not be ignored, and in fact should be celebrated! Spiritual gifts are mentioned here as an example of how our differences work together (vv. 28–31). We are created together to serve the church.

Paul insists that this variety within the body of Christ is necessary and important. It is God’s intention that there is “no division in the body” and that we have “equal concern for each other” (v. 25). The church should model unity to the rest of the world.

APPLY THE WORD

Think about the church you attend. Consider the wide variety of people God has drawn together. As you pray for unity today, why not name each individual who comes to mind? Thank God for their unique characteristics and the gift they are to your congregation. Ask God to bless them and to preserve and grow unity within your church family.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. John Jelinek would appreciate your prayers today. As the vice president and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, he shoulders a lot of responsibilities. May God provide him with wisdom and strength to continue leading well.

FRIDAY
APRIL
26

The greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

The Gift of Love

Never has there been such an extraordinary act of love as the death of Jesus on the Cross. Hymn writer Isaac Watts penned an emotional response to this gift: “Alas! And did my Savior bleed and did my Sov’reign die? / Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I? / Was it for crimes that I had done He groaned upon the tree? / Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!”

Jesus’ death was truly an act of love beyond our comprehension. Not only should we marvel at this gift, so freely given, but we must consider how God’s love, freely given to us, provides an example for us to follow.

In our text today, Paul focuses on three gifts of the Spirit: faith, hope, and love—and “the greatest of these is love” (v. 13). Paul’s teaching here aligns with everything Jesus did and taught. When asked which was

the greatest commandment, Jesus answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31). Love is the central building block of the gospel and the Christian life.

Love is more than an emotion. God-given love considers others more important than oneself (v. 4). It is forgiving, generous, and rejoices in truth (vv. 5, 6). We see clear distinctions between what love is and what it is not. Love is essential, and without love, all other gifts are worthless.

Our love becomes complete as we grow in Christian maturity (v. 10). As we grow closer to God we realize the depth of His love for us and grow in our ability to truly love others.

APPLY THE WORD

Is your heart full as you consider God’s love for you, displayed by the sacrifice of Jesus’ death on the Cross? If God loved us in this extraordinary way, how can we fail to love one another? Pray that God’s love will grow in your heart and be displayed in everything you say and do. May His love be so clearly reflected in your life that others take notice.

PRAY WITH US

Let’s pray for the students at Moody—both in the undergraduate program and in Moody Theological Seminary. May they follow God’s leading as they devote themselves to a study of His Word and preparation for ministry after graduation.

SATURDAY
APRIL
27

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:57

The Gift of the Resurrection

About a year and a half ago, I was given five orchid seeds. They were brown and dry and each about the size of a nickel. I soaked the seeds, planted them in soil, and then transferred the saplings outside. I watched as a small plant began to grow, and then, this year, I discovered delicate purple blossoms growing on the small orchid tree. Those flowers looked nothing like the dry brown seed I planted!

In this chapter of Corinthians, the apostle Paul speaks of how we, too, will be transformed. When we die, our bodies are sown like seeds; but as believers, we will be raised again and receive new bodies. All of this is made possible by Jesus Christ and patterned after His example. Jesus died as payment for our sins, was buried, and rose again, conquering the grave. He died and was resurrected so we could live!

Paul explains Christ's resurrection using the example of a seed. When you plant a seed, you don't expect the seed to look the same when it grows. In the same way, our new heavenly body will no longer resemble our physical or natural body. We who are perishable will receive a spiritual body that is imperishable (v. 42).

Our earthly bodies are frail. We become ill. We experience pain. We are wounded. We die. Our new, resurrected body will be imperishable. Notice the beautiful contrast between our old and new bodies. Dishonor is changed to glory. Weakness is transformed to power. When we die, our bodies become the dust of the earth but will be raised in the glory of heaven. Once frail and destructible, we will no longer be subject to corruption. We will be made new, perfected in Christ, no longer broken but whole and complete.

APPLY THE WORD

Thank God today for the gift of the resurrection. We thank Him first for His Son, Jesus Christ, who was resurrected from the dead to guarantee our future. Also thank Him for what the resurrection means to you and those you love. Our human bodies will one day be forever replaced with imperishable ones!

PRAY WITH US

Today we ask that you pray for Moody Radio's WRMB and its staff: Audrey Altman, Brigitte Sylvestre, Dolores King-St. George, Eric Johnson, and Becky Borgstrom. May their ministry bring the good news to many listeners in South Florida.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

1 Peter 3:15

SUNDAY
APRIL
28

The Gift of Hope

Author Maya Angelou said, “Hope and fear cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Invite one to stay.” Today, we celebrate the gift of hope, and biblical hope is linked to confidence. This hope is more than wishful thinking. When we hope our favorite team wins, we are expressing a wish that the odds will tilt in their favor. But biblical hope is marked by confident expectation based on the promises given to us by God. This hope casts out fear (see 1 John 4:18).

Peter returns our attention to the subject of suffering. Christian hope does not exist in an atmosphere of perfection. Rather, hope walks us through the difficult circumstances of life. Our passage today consoles believers who are enduring trials. “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous” (v. 12). God hears our prayers and knows His children. This hope affects our behavior. Notice the series of

responses. We are to watch the way we speak (v. 10). We are to avoid evil and choose what is good. We are to be known as those who pursue peace (v. 11).

As we follow God’s commands, our relationship with Him changes the ways we respond to hardship as well as our adversaries. We are not to follow what most feel is a natural instinct to “repay evil with evil or insult with insult” (v. 9). The hope we have in God changes the way we live today.

Hope gives us confidence in our heavenly future, therefore realigning our hearts and minds from earth to heaven. Knowing we have a certain destination beyond this world lessens the impact and our fear of temporary trials and threats. We know that our purpose and God’s plan for us extend beyond this physical life. Our hope is in the Lord!

APPLY THE WORD

Hope and fear both have exactly four letters. Yet these small words have powerful consequences in our lives. Is your life characterized more by hope or by fear? Today, ask God to give you His hope, a confidence in His care and in your future. May it change the way you live today and set you free from fear.

PRAY WITH US

Will you uphold in prayer Frank Leber, VP of Information Technology Services? Please pray that Frank’s leadership would continue to foster good teamwork within the IT department and good communication with other teams they serve.

MONDAY
APRIL
29

*Rejoice always, pray continually,
give thanks in all circumstances; for this
is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Give Thanks Always

As we marvel at the incredible gifts God has given to us, what should be our response? Paul has three excellent suggestions: rejoice, pray, and give.

The day of the Lord is drawing near! In this life, we cannot expect that life will always be tilted in our favor. God's people will face difficulty, trials, and persecution. Suffering is a reality. But because of who we are in God and what we have been so freely given, we do not have the same perspective as the rest of the world. "He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him" (v. 10). Our lives are transformed, not just for eternity but now.

Verse 16 offers three ways to live each day mindful of our new life in Christ. First, we are to rejoice always. We are to be people who find joy despite and through all of life's circumstances. This

joy is not merely being happy or living life blindly, but finding contentment and hope in God Himself.

Second, we are to pray continually. We are to remain connected to God through prayer. How can you possibly pray like that? We give each and every situation over to God. Praying continually is an ongoing conversation with God. We give each worry and concern to Him.

Finally, we are to be people marked by thankfulness. We are to count on our blessings, recognize the gifts we have been given, and be ready to praise. Paul suggests that as we live in the will of God, we are thankful for His care and guidance of each moment of our life. Whether or not the circumstance seems to our liking, we are thankful that He is in control and that He will see us through.

APPLY THE WORD

Let's follow Paul's urging to rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks. Write those three words where they will be noticeable: Rejoice. Pray. Thank. No matter the circumstances, remember who you are in Christ. Through Him, we are made new. He meets our daily needs. He gives us His wisdom. We have so much to thank Him for!

PRAY WITH US

Please add Moody's sponsorship and underwriting team to your prayers today, thanking God for the service of **Bryon Poirier, Charles Sheldon, and Jamin Baxter**. May they experience the goodness of God both in their work and personal lives.

For God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

TUESDAY
APRIL
30

His Gifts Inspire Us to Give

A study in *Scientific American* tested whether it is better to give than to receive. Participants were given a choice between receiving a monetary award or donating money to a charity. The result? “Our brains seem to suggest that the joy of being a gift’s giver may eclipse that of being its recipient.”

As we conclude this month’s study on the incredible gifts God has given us, what is our response? If God has given us everything from breath to nourishment and from love to hope, it should be clear that we too are called to give. The Corinthians had faithfully supported Paul with finances and assistance. “For I know of your eagerness to help,” said the Apostle (v. 2). Their giving supported the Lord’s work and Paul’s ministry. He encouraged them to be consistent in their giving and not to neglect those in need.

This passage reminds us how to give. First, we are to give deliberately and thoughtfully “what you have decided in your heart” (v. 7). We are to carefully consider the needs of those around us and determine how God would want us to help from all that He has given us. Second, we are to give not just from our wallet but from our hearts. We are to be generous in spirit: “God loves a cheerful giver” (v. 7). Finally, we are to give as an appropriate and necessary response. God has provided for us “abundantly,” so how can we not give willingly to others? (v. 8).

When we give, God promises that our needs will be met and our storehouse will be resupplied. Paul assures us that gift giving produces tremendous results, “overflowing” in thankfulness to God (v. 12). God’s gift to us is “indescribable”; how can we not be people marked by generosity (v. 15)?

APPLY THE WORD

As we come to an end of this month’s devotions, celebrating the indescribable gifts of God, take time to thank God for His blessing in your life. And perhaps consider a special gift you can give to mark the end of this study, a gift that will result not in thankfulness toward yourself but “overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God” (v. 12).

PRAY WITH US

In conclusion of our study this month, let us thank God for who He is. As a good Father, He gives good gifts to His children! That itself is a gift—to have a God who cares for us and loves us. Praise His holy name!



KIDS SAY THE WISEST THINGS

26 LESSONS
YOU DIDN'T KNOW
CHILDREN COULD
TEACH YOU

JON GAUGER

WHAT CAN KIDS TEACH YOU?

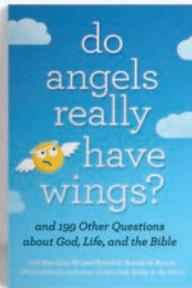
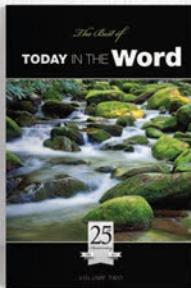
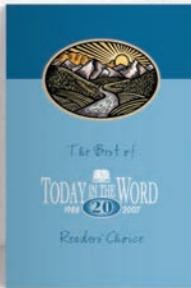
Moody Radio host Jon Gauger reveals 26 life lessons he's learned from his unfiltered conversations with children. Each humorous and moving story will help you rediscover truths about yourself and your Savior that only kids can teach you.



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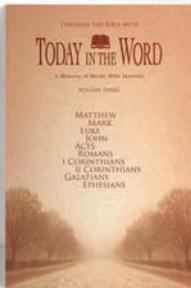
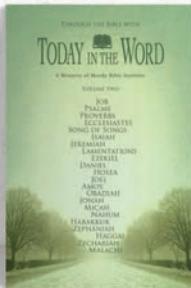
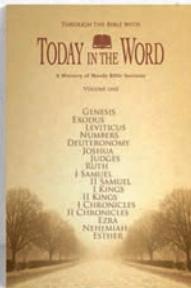


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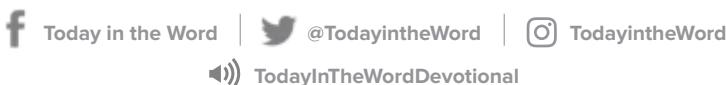
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