

A person wearing a bright yellow hooded jacket and dark pants stands with their back to the camera on a rugged, rocky coastline. They are looking out over a misty, mountainous landscape with a body of water in the distance. The sky is overcast and grey. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

TODAY IN THE **WORD**[™]

A ministry of Moody Bible Institute

FOLLOWING
BY FAITH

Favorite Scriptures of Faithful Christians

JANUARY 2020

You Look Just Like Your Dad

From the President of Moody Bible Institute

“One of the key ways people know you are a Christian, is because they see God’s love in the way you speak and act.”



As I grew older, people would tell me, “You look just like your Dad.” As a teenager, I argued that I looked nothing like him. Now, I take that as

a great compliment. My father, Bob Jobe, who died 22 years ago, has been the most influential Christian in my life. He was a pioneer, a maverick, a pastor, and a missionary. He had a mechanic’s hands lined with car oil, but also an open heart.

My father was a big presence, with his clear voice, loud laugh, and firm hands. He was an encourager, a motivator, known for loving God, loving life, and loving people. His Christlike values have been passed down to me and to my children.

Who do people say *you* look like? Your mom or your dad? Our DNA, which comes from our parents, shapes our physical features. The same can be said of our spiritual DNA. When we become a Christian, a child of God, we are shaped by our heavenly Father and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The apostle John says that if we are truly born of God, His characteristics will be evident in our life.

God has many characteristics. He is sovereign, merciful, just, and holy. But in his letter, John focuses on one: God is love. “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7). When we know God, others will notice His love in us. We will not just know about God intellectually, but we will see His living power in our lives.

As John says, one of the key ways people know you are a Christian, is because they see God’s love in the way you speak and act. “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (v. 12). Some people view Christians as angry, judgmental, vicious, intolerant, but the true love of God is the opposite.

The culture of the kingdom of God should be saturated with the power of His love. When someone walks into our home or our church, they should experience love like they’ve never felt before. God’s love in us should always be evident, even as we speak truth. Are you looking more and more like your heavenly Father? The highest compliment we can ever receive is if someone says we look a lot like Jesus. ■

Faith and Justification

by Dr. John Koessler

“God considers us righteous not because of our own merits, but because Jesus has redeemed us.”

Followers of Jesus Christ were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26). But the term they used most often to refer to themselves was “believers” (Acts 2:44; 1 Thess. 1:7; 1 Tim. 4:12; James 2:1). This familiar label indicates how important faith is to the Christian life. Faith is how we access the righteousness of Christ.

The apostle Paul explains this relationship in Romans 3 by showing how God has made a righteousness available that is apart from the Old Testament law. This righteousness is “given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Rom. 3:22). This righteousness has three important characteristics. First, it is God’s righteousness. Second, it comes to all who believe in Christ. Third, this righteousness can only come as a gift.

In his explanation Paul uses three important theological terms to help us understand the important connection between faith and righteousness: justification, redemption, and atonement (Rom. 3:24–25). To justify is

to vindicate or declare to be in the right. Justification is what a judge does when rendering a judgment of not guilty. But this justification includes an added dimension. Not only are we innocent of all charges, we have also been declared righteous. God considers us righteous not because of our own merits, but because Jesus has redeemed us. Captives were often redeemed through the payment of a ransom. Slaves could be bought out of slavery. Believers are redeemed by Christ’s sacrifice.

In Romans 3:25, Paul uses the imagery of substitution when he calls the shedding of Christ’s blood a “sacrifice of atonement.” He means that Jesus suffered on our behalf. He took our sin upon Himself and gave us His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 3:5). How do we accept God’s gracious offer of righteousness through Christ? It must be “received by faith” (Rom. 3:25). Faith is more than mere knowledge of what Jesus has done. Faith is reliance upon Christ for a righteousness that only He can supply. ■

For Further Study

To learn more read *By Faith Alone: Answering the Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification* by Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy Prentiss Waters (Crossway).

Go Deeper

We hope these questions will help you consider (or discuss with others) what God is teaching you through this month's study of His Word. We've left a bit of room to write down your thoughts as well!

WEEK 1: Who is a man or woman of faith you admire? Why is that person an example to you?

WEEK 2: What verse or passage of Scripture has been influential in your life?

WEEK 3: How do you think your life would be different if you focused on one verse or passage of Scripture for an entire day?

WEEK 4: What passage of Scripture from this month's study has meant the most to you? Why?

TODAY IN THE WORD™

Following by Faith

*All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you. — Psalm 145:10*

What do Harry Ironside, Fanny Crosby, Athanasius, and Mary McLeod Bethune have in common? You may know them as faithful followers of Christ who left a wonderful legacy of love and obedience to their Lord and Savior. But there's more—this month in *Today in the Word* we'll study favorite verses or Bible passages from famous, and not-so-famous, Christ-followers.

From these "life verses" we'll gain better understanding of how God's Word has motivated Christians through the ages. We pray this study will:

- Show you how the power of God's Word transforms lives
- Help you grow in your passion for reading and studying the Bible
- Inspire you with the faithful examples of fellow Christians
- Allow passages of Scripture to take permanent residence in your heart

You may notice that *Today in the Word* has a new, fresh design this month. Inside, you'll find all of your regular favorite features, along with a few new additions. Each month, we'll list your devotional takeaways (above) and questions for reflection or discussion. We hope you love this new look as much as we do!

Thank you for your friendship and continued support of this ministry! We look forward to learning from the Word of God together in 2020. ■

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Following by Faith

Read Hebrews 11:1–13

Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. —Hebrews 11:1

Do you have a favorite Bible verse or Scripture passage? This month, we will read portions of Scripture that defined the lives of Christ followers. Some names, such as Billy Graham, Charles Spurgeon, or Dwight Lyman Moody, might be familiar to you. Others, like Haddon Robinson, Athanasius, or Mary McLeod Bethune, may be less familiar. What these people have in common is their high view of God’s Word. We ask that the Holy Spirit will work in our lives as we reflect on their faithful examples and open God’s Word together.

In chapter 11 of Hebrews, often called the Hall of Faith, we read about individuals who followed God faithfully. These Old Testament names are familiar to us: Abel (vv. 3–4), Enoch (vv. 5–6), Noah (v. 7), Abraham (vv. 8–10), and Sarah (v. 11). They are noted, not just for their courage, bravery, and commitment to the Lord but also for their faith. But what exactly do we mean when we say someone has *faith*?

The author of Hebrews provides a definition: “Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (v. 1). Two components make up this definition. First, the word for *confidence* could also be translated as *assurance* and derives its meaning from that which has a solid foundation. The word *hope* (v. 1) is not a flippant, positive attitude, but means to wait with confidence, knowing salvation is coming. The second part of the verse communicates the importance of conviction. Even when we cannot see God at work, we have faith that what He says is true (v. 3). The people in Hebrews 11 were commended for their unwavering faith, even till they died (v. 13). As we learn about fellow Christ followers this month, may we also be inspired to follow Him faithfully.

► Make reading God’s Word a priority in the year ahead. It may help to pick a specific place and time each day to read. If you have time today, read Hebrews 11 and be inspired by the many who followed with faith.

Pray with Us

Welcome to the new year and a new study with *Today in the Word: Following by Faith*. Ask the Lord to use *Today in the Word* to strengthen our faith in Christ and increase our knowledge of God’s Word in 2020.

A Faithful Family

Read 2 Timothy 3:10–17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. — 2 Timothy 3:16

Harry Ironside was pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago for eighteen years (1930–1948). His teaching and preaching influenced thousands for Christ. But his faith was first shaped by his father and mother who taught him about Jesus and prayed he would come to know the Lord. They encouraged him to see D. L. Moody preach in 1888 at a Los Angeles evangelistic campaign. After several more months of wrestling with his faith, Ironside “rested on the Word of God and confessed Christ as my Savior.” His parents’ prayers were answered, and the future pastor and evangelist was shaped by their prayers.

Our text today contains Paul’s charge to young Timothy. The apostle encouraged Timothy to continue to believe in salvation through faith in Jesus. Timothy was also raised in a Christian household and learned his faith from his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). Paul says of the young man: “From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures” (3:15).

Paul warned that following Christ faithfully would not be easy. Timothy knew about the hardships Paul had faced (vv. 10–11), and he too would face persecution for being a Christian (vv. 12–13). Paul realized that any follower of Jesus would need encouragement to face an oppressive world. He encouraged Timothy to continue in what he learned as a child because of the people he learned it from (v. 14).

Paul inspired young Timothy to rely on God’s Word, which was instrumental in building his faith (v.15). Timothy’s family also played a crucial role in his life, sharing God’s Word with him and praying for him. The Scriptures have lasting power to shape our lives and equip us to be effective servants of God. As Paul says, they are inspired, God-breathed, so worthy of our time and attention (v. 16).

▶ How can you teach the next generation about God and His Word? Ask God for opportunities to share your faith with the young people in your life.

Pray with Us

Today’s devotional shows the importance of discipleship and mentoring for our Christian walk. Thank God for the privilege and opportunities He gives us to teach younger believers while also learning from more experienced followers of Christ.

Boasting Only in Christ

Read Galatians 6:11–18

*May I never boast except in the cross
of our Lord Jesus Christ. —Galatians 6:14*

Having preached the gospel to millions, the Rev. Billy Graham created an outstanding legacy. How does someone so well-known stay humble? To remind himself to always give Jesus Christ the glory, Graham kept Galatians 6:14 posted on the walls of his bedroom, dining room, bathroom, and in several other spots throughout his home: “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (NKJV).

At the end of his letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul reminded his readers that what matters was not being circumcised but rather being part of the new creation. Throughout his letter, with deep passion and frustration, Paul was teaching the Jewish and non-Jewish Christians the true gospel of Jesus. He wanted them to know how the gospel creates a new, multiethnic family which transforms people by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul was calling out the Jewish Christian leaders on their wrong and confusing message regarding the

Jewish law as well as their cowardly lifestyles (vv.12–13).

Then in verse 14, Paul contrasts himself with those who stress the need for circumcision. They wanted to boast in their accomplishments before others, while Paul wanted to boast only in what Jesus Christ has done through His saving work on the cross. Verse 15 summarizes his letter nicely: “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.”

We shouldn’t be surprised that Billy Graham’s life verse was about boasting only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Similar to Paul, Graham surrendered his life to the Lord’s will, and God used him mightily. It is hard to imagine what the world would be like without Graham’s passion to “never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14).

► What would it look like to boast in God’s work instead of your own? Try to become more aware of ways you can exalt the name of Jesus and God’s work in your life.

Pray with Us

Lord, may we always look to you and may we “never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14). Father, thank you for the beautiful examples of humility revealed in the lives of the heroes of faith in your Word.

Our Daily Compass

Read Hebrews 4:12–16

For the word of God is alive and active.—Hebrews 4:12

While Billy Graham was a spiritual advisor and counselor to dozens of world leaders, he went to one person for counsel, his wife Ruth. “She is a great student of the Bible. Her life is ruled by the Bible more than any person I’ve ever known,” said the late evangelist. Ruth Bell Graham’s passion for God’s Word helped her speak the truth. For instance, when Billy was under pressure to run for political office, Ruth advised: “When God calls you to be an evangelist, you don’t stoop to be president.”

God’s Word was “alive and active” for the Grahams, and it is just as powerful for you and me. The author of Hebrews says God’s Word is the most powerful tool on the planet. In the first century, a double-edged sword was used for earthly battles, but the author asserts that God’s Word is used for spiritual battles. Notice the way the author uses the characteristics of a sword to highlight the power of Scripture. Spending time in God’s Word allows God’s truth to cut through our

defenses and convicts us of even the most hidden sin (v. 12). It “judges the thoughts and attitudes” of our heart (v. 12). The truth of God’s Word reveals what is hidden within us, because “nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight” (v. 13).

The good news, or gospel message, is that even though God knows our sinfulness, He sent His Son to bridge the gap. Jesus stands as our great high priest appealing before God the Father on our behalf (v. 14). Because Jesus was tempted in every way, He sympathizes with us in our times of need (v. 15). Therefore, we have no reason *not* to approach the throne of grace with confidence (v. 16).

► Ruth Bell Graham called the Bible her rule book, her compass. What is your compass? What helps you navigate your daily decisions? Too often we turn to the daily newscast, a popular author, or even well meaning friends to give advice. Instead, ask God to direct you through the study of His Word.

Pray with Us

This is an important time of year for Moody’s education ministry. Please pray for our Admissions staff as they process hundreds of applications, answer questions, and meet with future students.

Lay Hold of the Bible

Read Colossians 3:15–17

*Let the word of Christ dwell
among you richly.—Colossians 3:16*

Before becoming the fourth president of Moody Bible Institute, William Henry “Will” Houghton pastored several churches in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and New York. Biographer Wilbur Smith said of him, “Two primary passions possessed the soul of Will Houghton: evangelism and the study of the Word of God.” Houghton’s legacy can still be seen at Moody, specifically his advocacy for Moody Radio programs to be broadcast regularly and widely. He was convinced that God uses the Scripture to transform lives.

Today’s passage from the apostle Paul’s letter to the believers in Colossae was one of Houghton’s favorites. These verses follow Paul’s teaching that we have been made alive in Christ. Here, Paul explains what a difference that makes. In verse 15, Paul uses an imperative for the word “to rule” as he wants Christians to have peace with themselves and with each other. In verse 16, Paul uses another imperative when he urges the message of Christ, or the Word of Christ, “to dwell” in

us richly. These two words, “rule” and “dwell,” signal a needed action on our part.

Paul urges Christ followers to live a life soaked in Scripture. Colossians 3:16, in particular, encourages believers to allow God’s Word to dwell in their hearts and lives in a deep and meaningful way. Bible study and teaching, reading Scripture, and music are important in this endeavor. Too often we read God’s Word or hear a sermon preached and quickly turn our mind to other things. Instead, we are urged to let the message of Christ soak in, to dwell in us richly, until it permeates everything we do. “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (v. 17). President Houghton was right: “Lay hold of the Bible until the Bible lays holds of you.”

▶ Next time you read a passage of Scripture, don’t just read it once. Read it repeatedly and try praying slowly through the words of Scripture.

Pray with Us

Join us in thanking God for Moody’s leaders past and present who have guided this ministry in the power of God’s Word. We’re grateful for their leadership.

Turn and Look

Read Isaiah 45:22–25

*Turn to me and be saved,
all you ends of the earth. — Isaiah 45:22*

On a bitterly cold Sunday morning in 1850, a young man slipped into the back row of a tiny Methodist church. Since the head minister was delayed due to the storm, an uneducated deacon delivered a message. His text? “Look unto Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 45:22 KJV). Near the end, the deacon looked at the strange boy sitting on the back pew and said, “Young man, you look very miserable. And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you do not obey my text.” He shouted, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ.” At that moment, a young Charles Spurgeon surrendered his life to the Lord.

The beginning verse of today’s passage convicted young Spurgeon and influenced him to become one of the greatest preachers of all time. Verse 22 states both the simplicity and the necessity of salvation. All we must do to receive salvation is “look” (KJV) or “turn” (NIV) to the Lord. Both convey the need to shift our attention

to Jesus. Spurgeon was struck by the effortlessness of this declarative statement. It did not take years of deliberate effort but only a moment of looking to be saved. “In the LORD alone are deliverance and strength” (v. 24); salvation is not based on our efforts.

The power rests in God alone! And, this invitation is open to everyone, to “all you ends of the earth” (v. 22). Verses 23–25 elaborate on the concept of God’s matchlessness and power. The author writes that “every knee will bow” and every tongue will confess that only God is able to save (v. 23). This truth from God’s Word captivated a young Spurgeon exactly 170 years ago, and it continues to change lives today.

► Have you looked for answers in the wrong places? Remember that the Lord wants us to look to Him. Turn your focus onto Him alone, trusting that He is sovereign. If you have never surrendered your life to the One who gives salvation, we encourage you to “turn” and “look” to Him today.

Pray with Us

Today’s Scripture passage encourages “the ends of the earth” to turn to the Lord and “be saved” (Isa. 45:22). Lord, it’s our prayer that you will draw those who don’t know you to your heart of love, and they will turn and find salvation.

The Flawless Word

Read 2 Peter 3:14–18

*And the words of the LORD are flawless,
like silver purified in a crucible, like gold
refined seven times.—Psalm 12:6*

You may have never heard the name Athanasius before, but you have been impacted by his steadfast commitment to God’s truth. Athanasius was an important church leader in Alexandria, Egypt, in the fourth century AD. A pastor and a biblical scholar, he was deeply concerned about the spread of false teaching. He was especially troubled by those who claimed Jesus was a created being. Athanasius was such a staunch defender of the truth about Jesus that after his death others called him a “pillar of the Church.”

The apostle Peter was also concerned about the spread of false teaching and its moral effect on the church. In 2 Peter 3, the apostle Peter is encouraging believers to look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are jumping in near the end of his letter. However, even in his conclusion, Peter urges his readers to “be found spotless, blameless and at peace” (v. 14). He connects his own message to that of “our dear brother Paul” (v. 15).

Peter wants his readers to know

that the Lord’s patience toward humankind’s sin leads to salvation for all who believe in Jesus (v. 15). But he warns them about the danger of “other Scriptures” which “ignorant and unstable people distort” (v. 16). Like in Peter’s time, and again in Athanasius’s, we must be careful not to be seduced by false teaching or doctrine. We must ask God to help us study His Word, and to guard our hearts and minds from what is false. As the Psalmist says, “the words of the LORD are flawless” (Ps. 12:6). Athanasius’s affection for God’s Word was apparent. He states, “These [letters] are fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words that they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness.”

► Ask God to open your eyes and mind this month to discovering new truths from His Word, and to impress His promises deeply on your heart. Only God’s truth can satisfy our deepest thirst.

Pray with Us

We come to God with praise and thanksgiving for the beautiful treasure of His Word. Let’s remember with gratitude faithful Christians throughout church history who preserved and revered the canon of the Bible.

God Uses Our Groaning

Read Romans 8:22–30

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him. —Romans 8:28

Sixty-four years ago today, Nate Saint and four other American missionaries were killed by the Auca tribe (now called Waoranis) in Ecuador while trying to share the gospel. Their story inspired thousands of people to dedicate their lives to missions, particularly to minister to unreached people groups. Decades later, Nate's son Steve reflected on what happened to his father, as well as the bond he had now built with the tribe, declaring, "What the Waorani meant for evil, God used for good."

In our Scripture reading today, Paul acknowledges to the believers in Rome that there would be pain, suffering, and mourning on this earth. He describes these feelings as "groans" or "groaning" (vv. 22, 23, and 26). In the original language, a groan could also mean an inward, unexpressed feeling of sorrow. There is no doubt that when we receive awful news about a friend, are given a life-altering diagnosis, or lose a loved one, we feel an enormous amount of "groaning." Sometimes, it may even be

difficult to know how to pray. Paul says in verse 26 and 27 that during these times the Spirit Himself intercedes on our behalf.

Paul then changes the dynamics of his thoughts and boldly declares that even in the midst of suffering, God is still in control! He promises to use even our groaning for His good (vv. 28–30). Paul asserts that God's sovereignty is ultimately for the Lord's glory. This reflects what Jesus told His disciples, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Even though pain and suffering are common to all of us, God can and will use our groaning for His good.

► Have you seen God use a difficult circumstance in your life for His good? Even when we don't know how to pray, we can ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for us. Perhaps something significant is happening to a friend or a family member today. Spend time praying for them during this time of groaning.

Pray with Us

Lord Jesus, help us stay faithful even in the most difficult seasons of our lives. You said that in this life we will have tribulations, so we ask that during times of trials and hardships we will see your loving kindness and grace for us.

The Power of Prayer

Read Matthew 6:5–13

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. —James 5:16

Not many Christians have heard of Emma Dryer. In the late 1800s, Dryer left her successful career as an educator to join evangelist D. L. Moody in Chicago. For over a decade she helped begin a training school called the Chicago Evangelization Society, today called Moody Bible Institute. D. L. Moody described Dryer as “the best teacher of the Word of God in the United States.” Biographers note that the power behind Emma Dryer’s life was her devotion to prayer. Dryer was a devoted prayer warrior!

The power and nature of prayer is shown in today’s passage. Jesus taught His disciples that when they pray, they should avoid the outlandish and gaudy prayers which were common practices of the day (v. 5). Jesus encouraged His disciples to find a secluded space and speak directly to the Father (v. 6a). This approach allowed those who prayed to be open, authentic, and humble as opposed to fake or full of pride. Jesus taught that a quiet prayer would be rewarded (v. 6b).

Jesus then gave His disciples what we call The Lord’s Prayer. This template shows us how to pray (vv. 9–13). We address the Lord as *Our Father*. In Romans 8:15, we are told that as the adopted children of God, we can cry out “Abba Father”—an intimate way of addressing God, much as a child will call out for Daddy. This is followed by recognizing that we serve the God Almighty who resides in heaven. His name is *holy* (v. 9).

Jesus concludes by outlining three portions of prayer: give us, forgive us, and lead us. This approach and template is one Emma Dryer also adopted. The Lord used her prayers and life to impact the world with the Word of God and the powerful message of Jesus Christ.

► Even though it may take years to see an answer, you can be assured that your prayers are being heard. Let’s pray to the Lord in a reverent and humble manner: “Holy Father, Give us. Forgive us. Lead us.”

Pray with Us

Join us as we thank the Lord for the women of faith He calls to ministry. One of them was Emma Dryer whose life demonstrated the power of prayer. May we also be prayer warriors!

In the Name of Jesus

Read Acts 2:14–39

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.—1 Peter 1:3

We don't know exactly what the apostle Peter's favorite verse would have been, but a continual theme in his ministry, preaching, and writings was Jesus Christ's resurrection. This message from Peter and the other disciples rang true from the beginning and is the foundation on which Christianity rests. In the beginning of Peter's first letter to Christians scattered around the northern regions he writes, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

In today's passage, we get to listen in on the first sermon Peter preached. After the Holy Spirit's presence was felt at Pentecost, Peter stood up and addressed the confused crowd. He directly confronted the crowd's misconception that the men were drunk on wine because they were speaking in other languages. He joked with them saying, "They are not drunk, it is only nine in the morning!" After quoting

from the prophet Joel as the foundation for his message (vv. 17–21), Peter got to the central point: Jesus.

Peter made his listeners aware that Jesus was at their doorstep. They had seen, interacted with, and played a crucial part in His death. However, instead of condemning their actions, Peter concluded his sermon with one central idea, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (v. 36).

Then, Peter urged them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus (v. 38). By doing so, they would publicly declare that they were no longer going to live by the ways of the world. Instead, they would surrender their lives to the only one who could truly save people from their sins, the risen Lord Jesus.

► Perhaps you believe in Jesus but have not yet been baptized. If so, reach out to your pastor to talk about publicly proclaiming your allegiance to Jesus, our resurrected King.

Pray with Us

Today, Moody Aviation's new student orientation is happening on our Spokane, Wash., campus. Will you pray for these future missionary aviation pilots and mechanics, as they train to bring the gospel to hard-to-reach places?

The Mt. Everest Passage

Read Isaiah 53

*But when the set time had fully come,
God sent his Son. — Galatians 4:4*

For nearly 60 years, Haddon Robinson taught thousands of seminary students how to preach. His textbook on homiletics sold more than 300,000 copies in many languages. Recently, he went to be with the Lord, but his legacy on evangelical homiletics continues. Before he passed, Robinson chose to have Isaiah 53 read at his memorial service. He called it “The Mt. Everest Passage of the Bible.”

In his sermon on today’s passage, Robinson notes that we see the “other-side” of God. Throughout the Old Testament, God expresses His power, might, strength, and dominance. In this passage, however, we see the other side of God, portrayed here as meek, humble, and a silent sheep being led to the slaughter. This is what Robinson means by the “other-side” of God. The ruler and commander of the universe is portrayed as a suffering servant.

At first glance, you were probably able to pick out several verses that are fulfilled by the life and death of Jesus. However, the *entire* chapter

summarizes Jesus’ life, death, and reaction caused by His suffering: From the initial prophecy in verse 2 of growing up as a tender root in the midst of a hostile environment (Roman rule and reign) to the final verse describing the suffering servant as bearing the sin of many and making intercession for the transgressors (v. 12). Even details of His suffering and burial are predicted here (vv. 8–9). Jesus Christ fulfills all the prophesies in our passage.

The prophet Isaiah wrote these words some 700 years before the birth of Jesus! Here we read about Jesus, whose life was “an offering for sin” (v. 1). Isaiah gives us a behind-the-scenes look at what the God of the Universe would endure through His life and death. He enables us to see the “other-side” of God.

► Reread today’s passage and meditate on the sacrifice Christ made on your behalf. Ask God to allow the Spirit to speak to you through the Word.

Pray with Us

Moody’s undergraduate and seminary students arrive at the Chicago campus today, some for the very first time. As they unpack boxes and open suitcases, pray that God will also open their hearts and minds for what He’ll teach them this semester.

Saved by Grace

Read Ephesians 2:1–10

*For it is by grace you have been saved,
through faith.—Ephesians 2:8*

Dr. James Gray was Moody Bible Institute's third president (1904–1934). One historian noted, "His leadership during the critical and turbulent years following the death of Mr. Moody probably has resulted in him being held the most responsible more than any other man for the shape of the Institute as it is known today." Some may not know that Gray also loved to write hymns. He penned the lyrics for the hymn, titled "Only a Sinner." Influenced by Ephesians 2:8, the refrain reads, "Only a sinner saved by grace! Only a sinner saved by grace! This is my story, to God be the glory. I'm only a sinner saved by grace!"

In Ephesians 2:1–7, Paul was writing to the believers in Ephesus, now in modern-day Turkey. The apostle was explaining their past, present, and future position with Christ. Verses 1–3 describe our struggle with sin which ultimately leads to death and deserves God's wrath. However, Paul appears to do a complete 180-degree switch in verses 4 and 5, beginning with the word

"but." He states that God intervened because of His enormous and unconditional love for us. The future awaiting the believer is shown in verses 6 and 7. We will be seated with Christ in the heavenly realms and fully receive the Lord's incomparable riches of grace.

In verses 8 and 9, Paul summarizes this emotional and spiritual journey: "It is by grace you have been saved." We are not saved by ourselves. No amount of effort can achieve what God has given. That is why the gift of salvation is so precious. This has been the story of countless people who have put their trust in Jesus Christ, and it is no wonder that Dr. Gray wanted to make it the focal point of his hymn. It was the central theme not only of this song but also of his life.

► Have you received the grace and forgiveness that comes only from Jesus? We encourage you to do so today. If you already have accepted His gift of salvation, take a minute to thank God. It is completely undeserved! And it secures your eternal future.

Pray with Us

We invite you to reflect on the powerful, amazing words that Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus—our Scripture reading today. During your time with God, thank Him for the precious gift of salvation, extended to all, through faith.

God Protects Us

Read Psalm 91

*He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust. —Psalm 91:2*

On her daily Moody Radio program, Janet Parshall addresses cultural issues through a biblical lens. Based in Washington, D.C., Parshall is known for her unflinching look at complex topics. When asked about her favorite Bible verse, Parshall responded, “*I will say of the LORD, ‘My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust’*” (Ps. 91:2, NASB). She explains, “People will disappoint us, institutions will fail us, and life comes with turbulence and tribulation. But God, who loves and protects us, can always be trusted.”

This truth is exactly what the Psalmist wanted to share in today’s Scripture passage. Psalm 91 can be divided into four segments: verses 1–2, 3–8, 9–13, and 14–16. The beginning of this psalm (vv. 1–4) is more than just the introduction, it presents the main idea. The psalmist declares that the person who takes up residence in the shelter of God, the Most High, will find rest (v. 1). Verse 2 expounds on this thought by stating that we can confidently place our trust in the Lord who is a strong and

mighty fortress for protection.

The next two major sections of this psalm, verses 3–8 and 9–13, expand on those first two verses by describing what the Lord’s sovereignty and protection look like. As you read these two sections, notice how often the psalmist uses the word “will.” He wants us to know that when we dwell in the shelter of the Most High, placing our trust in God alone, protection and guidance *will* come.

In the final section the word *will* is used again. This time, the psalmist explains what will come alongside God’s protection and presence: His deliverance and salvation. Parshall was exactly right, the God who loves and protects us, can always be trusted.

► Do you make notations in your Bible? If so, underline every time the psalmist uses the word “will.” These are the “will” promises the Lord makes to us! Commit your day to the Lord, take refuge in Him, and see what *will* happen.

Pray with Us

Today the spring semester begins at Moody. Will you remember our faculty in prayer as they begin their classes and ministry to students? May they be refreshed from winter break and come ready for the tasks of the new season.

Christian Households

Read Ephesians 5:21–33

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.—Ephesians 5:21

“When I was 10, all I’d ever known at home was chaos,” said pastor and author Tony Evans. However, things changed after his father put his faith in Christ. His mother was against her husband’s newly found faith. But, over time, she was impressed by his patience, commitment to reading God’s Word, and Christ-like attitude. One night, she admitted, “I want what you have because it must be real.” His dad, then his mother, followed by Tony Evans and his siblings, all came to know Christ as their Savior. Evans says, “The impact of a father on a home, the impact of a husband on a marriage, and the impact of a man on a church or community can’t be emphasized enough.”

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul gives instructions on how to establish a Christian household. The beginning verse expresses how each member of a Christian family ought to relate to one another. When Paul speaks of submission in verse 21 he is urging family members to treat each other

with respect and humility. He goes on to paint a picture of selflessness and servanthood where a family tries to “out-serve” one another.

Verses 22–24 are directed specifically to wives and verses 25–33 focus on husbands. Both husbands and wives are to consider that they treat their spouse in a similar way to how they treat the Lord. He is at the center of our relationships. Many books have been written and sermons preached on these verses, but it is always important to keep verse 21 as our focal point. When all members of a family make it a priority to serve one another, look out for one another, and to think of others more highly than themselves, we will become the wives and husbands God intended us to be.

► For some, these verses may be difficult. We are to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (v. 21). How will you put others ahead of yourself today?

Pray with Us

Moody’s president, Dr. Mark Jobe, will appreciate your prayer support today. Pray that he and his leadership team will continue to work well together in order to serve the Institute in the best possible way, in unity and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Questions & Answers

by Dr. Eric C. Redmond, Associate Professor of Bible

Q I've heard some people say they have a life verse from the Bible! How do you know what verse out of so many in the Bible is the one for you? How do you find a life verse?

A Many people choose a special Bible verse they have found to be greatly encouraging in their faith journey. Maybe they read it during a time of discouragement. Or, perhaps, the verse played a significant role in their conversion or early Christian growth. Others return to a verse repeatedly to find direction in the Christian life or an assurance of the Lord's faithfulness. Taking hold of such verses is something people do freely, and there is no obligation for you to choose one.

If you wish to identify such a verse, I would suggest seeking one that reveals something about God, offers you instruction, or reminds you of the hope you have in Christ. I know many people who have chosen Philippians 4:13: "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." This verse reveals God as the one who empowers us to do His will. For the Apostle Paul, that meant being content whether in need or with plenty. A verse like this can become invaluable to a believer experiencing prolonged job loss, the stress of long-term elder care, a decrease in

household income, or the burden of waiting for a wayward child to yield to faith in Christ.

More important than choosing a life verse is the practice of memorization and faithful Bible reading. The Lord has given us the fullness of Scripture in order for us to hear His voice in every aspect of our lives. You would do well, therefore, to begin memorizing portions of Scripture, such as the Sermon on the Mount. Memorizing lengthy passages may seem a huge challenge, but if you memorize a verse a day, you will have this memorized in four months. You will be strengthened for a lifetime by hiding God's Word in your heart (Ps. 119:11).

Q I have a friend who says we should pray only to the Father, not Jesus or the Holy Spirit. According to my friend, the Lord's Prayer is the basis for this. Is it wrong for me to pray to Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

A The Lord's Prayer gives us a pattern of approaching the Lord. The pattern begins with acknowledging God as our Father, which for a first-century Jewish person would have meant simply acknowledging the one true God. The Father is the "one God" to the people of Israel who would have acknowledged Him in the daily reciting of The Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4–9.

“How do you find a life verse?”

However, believers in the early church commonly cried out to the Lord Jesus. For example, when Stephen was being stoned, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). Immediately he again prayed to Jesus, saying, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (v. 60). In one of his benedictions Paul prayed, “May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word” (2 Thess. 2:16–17). This prayer is directed to both God the Father and Jesus. Paul’s inclusion of such language means that the Father approves of Jesus receiving the same prayers as He does.

Most importantly, Jesus said to His disciples: “You may ask *me* for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:14). Jesus’ expectation was that His followers would pray directly to Him or the Father, for He and the Father are one. We can pray to the Lord Jesus, in His name, and expect that He will hear our prayers. There are no New Testament examples of praying to the Holy Spirit. However, in keeping with the working of the Spirit and His role in redemption, and in conjunction with His full deity, it would not be out of bounds to ask Him to fill you or a group of believers with His power, or

to pray that He might bring revival to lost places around the world (see Acts 13:52; Eph. 5:18).

Q **When is the Holy Spirit first mentioned in the Bible? Jesus said He left us the Comforter in the New Testament, but are there references to the Spirit in the Old Testament?**

A The first mention of the Holy Spirit is in Genesis 1:2: “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” The Holy Spirit was at work restraining the “darkness” upon the waters, appearing as a participant in the Creation. The next clear reference is in Exodus 31:3, where God fills Bezalel “with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills,” so that he and Oholiab might construct the tabernacle and its furnishings. A third is found in Numbers 11:17–29, where God rests on the prophets the same Spirit that was upon Moses. While this is a very different working than the permanent indwelling of the Spirit in the New Testament, we can see how the Spirit empowered God’s servants in the Old Testament for a particular task. ■

Take Up and Read

Read Romans 13:11–14

Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.—Romans 13:12

In the summer of 386 A.D., Aurelius Augustine, better known as St. Augustine, sat weeping in his friend's garden. He was contemplating his life. Although he enjoyed the desires of the world, something was missing. Then he heard a child singing, "Take up and read! Take up and read!" Noticing a scroll near his friend's side, he picked it up and read Romans 13:13–14. Later, he said, "No further would I read, nor had I any need; instantly at the end of this sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away." God would use Augustine as one of the world's most well-known theologians.

Our text today was originally meant for the Romans, but it applies to us as well. In the paragraph prior to today's text, Paul emphasizes the importance of loving one another because the day when the Lord returns is drawing near. He urges a change in behavior—not later, but now: "do this, understanding the present time" (v. 11). He continues this emphasis on being

prepared for the Lord's arrival here. In addition to loving one another, Paul urges believers to put aside the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light (v. 12). The armor here is the same spiritual armor described in Ephesians 6:10–18.

Notice the stark contrast between darkness and light. This contrast shows the difference between our old life and our new behavior. Paul describes some of the deeds of darkness in verse 13. For Augustine, this list revealed his life's ambitions. The Holy Spirit convicted him to stop gratifying his human desires and instead to "clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ" (v.14). We are to "wake up from [our] slumber" (v. 11) and allow God to change our heart, our mind, and our life.

► Where are you in your relationship with Christ? Take up God's Word and read! You will find the answers you are looking for. They may not come right away, but I'm confident that your life will be changed by God's Word and through Jesus Christ.

Pray with Us

Like Augustine, do you need to just pick up the Bible and read? May we be "people of the Book" who value God's Word and study it daily. Our prayer is that we will walk in the light and will not allow darkness to sidetrack us.

The Only God

Read 1 Timothy 1:12–17

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.—1 Timothy 1:17

Jonathan Edwards was a philosopher, theologian, pastor, and president of Princeton University. Although he became a prominent leader of the First Great Awakening when thousands surrendered their lives to Christ, Edwards never sought the pulpit. One interesting fact: his original passion was studying insects! As a young man, Edwards struggled with the idea of a supreme and sovereign God. It was not until his conversion in 1721, after reading 1 Timothy 1:17, that He came face to face with who God is.

In verses 12–16, the Apostle Paul explains the grace he received from God. He recollects his past as a “blasphemer,” “persecutor,” and “violent man” (v. 13). Paul calls himself the “worst of sinners” (v. 16). Throughout his life Paul never forgot his old ways. Instead, he contrasted them with the mercy and grace God had shown him. Remembering his sins enabled Paul to glorify God even more. Instead of hiding his former life, he

thanked Jesus for redeeming him from it (vv. 14–16).

After recounting what the Lord had done for him, Paul couldn’t contain himself. His feelings seem to burst onto the page as He declares God’s majesty in verse 17. God is the eternal, immortal, and invisible King (v. 17). We owe Him our deepest reverence and allegiance. When Edwards read verse 17, he too felt a sense of wonder of who he was in light of what God had done. Edwards described that moment as “a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before . . . I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven.”

► When you share your life’s story, give glory and honor to God! Whether your past is as turbulent as Paul’s or more peaceful, your conversion through Christ is still miraculous. Jesus Christ died and rose from the grave for you!

Pray with Us

Together with the Apostle Paul, we thank Christ for His mercy and grace to us. Thank you, Lord, for saving us, each one—“the worst of sinners.” We pray for boldness in sharing our story as a testimony of your love and power.

In Christ Alone

Read Matthew 28:1–10

*He is not here; he has risen,
just as he said. — Matthew 28:6*

“In Christ Alone” by Stuart Townend, Keith Getty, and Kristyn Getty has quickly become a favorite worship song around the world. After receiving the melody from Keith, Stuart immediately felt it had an “eternal, enduring aspect.” He thought the lyrics should be about “Jesus’ life, death and resurrection and what that means for us.” Stuart says the power of the song “points to what Christ went through. We get to stand before him not because of our great faith or because we are doing well as a Christian, but purely and simply because of what he has done. That’s why the song is helpful. That’s why it means something.”

The women in today’s text were physically present during the powerful experience described in “In Christ Alone.” Mary Magdalene and Mary, Jesus’ mother, along with others, witnessed Jesus’ arrest, torture, and crucifixion. *Scorned by the ones He came to save.* On this day, when they returned to the place where *His body lay*, they were met by something

extraordinary. The grave was open; the body was gone.

A messenger from God shared news they could hardly believe, “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay” (v. 6). What an extraordinary moment that must have been when their grief turned to astonishment, replaced by excitement and joy. The text describes their response, “afraid yet filled with joy” (v. 8). They hurried to tell the disciples.

Imagine their further astonishment when “Suddenly Jesus met them” (v. 9). The women saw Jesus face to face, worshipping at His feet as He stood beside them. *As He stands in victory, sin’s curse has lost its grip on me. For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.*

► Music has a powerful effect on our lives. What is one of your favorite hymns or worship songs? Why does it resonate with you? Read the lyrics and explore the biblical truths behind its words.

Pray with Us

Lord, as we read today’s Scripture, we share the amazement and joy of the women at the empty grave. We pray that the words of the angel, “He is not here; he is risen,” will always retain their freshness and miraculous power in our lives.

The Vine and the Fig Tree

Read Micah 4:1–5

*Everyone will sit under their own vine
and under their own fig tree. —Micah 4:4*

The father of our nation, George Washington, was extremely private about his personal faith. But the President often used biblical references to express his belief that God was involved in guiding and protecting the United States of America. At his military resignation before Congress, Washington passionately declared that he was trusting “our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God.”

Today’s verse, found in the book of Micah, was one Washington quoted regularly. He referenced the phrase, “under their vine and fig tree,” almost 50 times in his writings and public addresses. In Micah chapter 4, the prophet was warning Israel and Judah that God would bring the Assyrian and Babylonian empires to destroy the Northern kingdom and ravage the capital of the Southern kingdom, Jerusalem. Micah accused Israel’s leaders and prophets of corruption and injustice and warned the people of the coming disaster from the outside empires.

The phrase “under their vine and fig tree” is repeated three times in Scripture: Micah 4:4, 1 Kings 4:25, and Zechariah 3:10. It describes the freedom and independence God’s people enjoy under His rule. Micah was giving his listeners a ray of hope. Jerusalem and the temple would not be permanently destroyed. “In the last days” (v. 1), God would rebuild and restore His temple and it would be the new meeting place for God’s people between heaven and earth.

Under this new establishment, all nations would stream to Jerusalem, where God would be recognized as the King (v. 1). God is the righteous teacher (v. 2), judge (v. 3a), and peacemaker (v. 3b). Under His rule, everyone will be free from tyranny and oppression (v. 4).

► Micah declares in verse 5 that nations choose who their god may be, but His people ought to walk in the name of the Lord forever. Whether you belong to the United States of America or another country, your first allegiance is to the Triune God.

Pray with Us

Today, we invite you to uphold in prayer Moody’s trustees—dedicated Christians who faithfully serve MBI with their expertise, time, and energy. Ask God to guide them in all decisions they make about the future of Moody’s ministries.

God, God . . . Yes!

Read Revelation 19:1–9

Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.—Revelation 19:6

William Culbertson served as Moody Bible Institute’s fifth president (1948–1971). The former pastor was known as someone who deeply cared about the person in front of him and gave that person his undivided attention. Although an introvert, he was a highly sought-after preacher. During his 23 years as president at MBI he developed the curriculum, introduced the Missionary Aviation program, and expanded the campus. In 1971, Culbertson went to be with the Lord. After quoting a favorite Bible verse, “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns” (Rev. 19:6), he quietly said, “God, God . . . yes!” and then met Jesus face to face.

In our passage today, the apostle John gives a glimpse of a heavenly celebration—one which all believers will witness in person some day. First and foremost, it will be filled with praise. Notice in our text how often the word *Hallelujah!* appears. The multitude in heaven will shout “Hallelujah!” because the enemy has been

condemned and cast down once and for all (vv. 2–3). The final *Hallelujah!* will come from the great multitude. The sound will be like the “roar of roaring waters and like loud peals of thunder” (v. 6). This serves as an announcement that the time has come for the “wedding of the Lamb” (v. 7).

Hallelujah, or Alleluia, means “Praise the LORD!” It conveys a mood of joy and exuberance. This wedding between King Jesus and His bride, the church, will be a joy-filled celebration. It will be an event infused with the worship of God (v. 10). Whether we leave this earth or are still here when the Lord returns, we will be singing “Hallelujah” to Him! Let’s not wait until that day. Like William Culbertson, let us continually praise the Lord and always say, “God, God . . . yes!”

► Whether you know it or not, you have been given an invitation to this very special wedding. Don’t let a day go by—RSVP to the party! Repent of your sins and say, “God, God . . . yes!”

Pray with Us

Please pray that as we go to our church services and worship the Lord, today’s Scripture reading from Revelation 19 will illuminate and magnify our praise. We pray we will better understand the heavenly, eternal perspective of our worship.

Love Your Enemies

Read Matthew 5:43–48

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.—Matthew 5:44

Today in the United States we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day. King is remembered for his non-aggressive demonstrations for civil and social justice, but he should also be remembered as a preacher, pastor, and theologian. His PhD was in theology; he was a pastor for six years; and he was a preacher nearly all his life. In a well-known sermon, he emphasized Matthew 5:43–48 and the importance of loving one's enemies.

In today's text, the word *love* is used several times (vv. 43, 44, and 46). The word *phileo* conveys affection, fondness, or friendship. The word *eros* refers to love or passion. And *agape*, used here in Matthew 5:43–46, is the form of love which delights in giving and reflects God's own nature.

Jesus takes the old Law and adds to it. Notice the contrast between the old rule (v. 43) and the new (v. 44). We are called to love (*agape*) and pray for our enemies. Why? Because you are not representing yourself, but "your Father in heaven" (v. 45). We are called to "be

perfect" as we grow in likeness to our heavenly Father.

King preached, "It's significant that [Jesus] does not say, 'Like your enemy.' Like is a sentimental something, an affectionate something. There are a lot of people that I find it difficult to like. . . . But Jesus says, love them. And love is greater than like. Love is understanding, redemptive goodwill for all men, so that you love everybody. . . . And here you come to the point that you love the individual who does the evil deed, while hating the deed that the person does."

What does it look like to love your enemies? Jesus Christ was not only the first to preach this message, but the first to live it out. Even while He was being crucified and killed He continually, unconditionally showed love.

► I gave my students the assignment to listen to King's *I Have a Dream* speech this weekend. I want to challenge you to do the same. As Christians, God calls us to love others with *agape* love.

Pray with Us

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). Lord, as we read today your words about love in the Sermon on the Mount, would you reveal by your Holy Spirit how we are to love our enemies in this day and age?

Waiting on the Lord's Return

Read Isaiah 52:1–12

Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.—Isaiah 52:8

Adoniram Judson (A. J.) Gordon was an American preacher, writer, and founder of Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The New England pastor would often join evangelist D. L. Moody at his Northfield conventions. Under his leadership, Clarendon Street Baptist Church became one of the most vibrant and missions-oriented churches of its day.

Today's text contains one of Gordon's favorite verses, Isaiah 52:8. The prophet Isaiah is delivering a message of great hope for the people of Israel; they will be delivered from their exile in Babylon. However, Isaiah states that an even greater hope awaits in the future when a restored Jerusalem will unite all nations in peace under the Messianic King.

Isaiah 52 begins by calling Zion, or Jerusalem, to "Wake up!" The prophet foresees the restoration of the strength, beauty, and vibrancy of God's holy city. In verses 3–6, Isaiah reminds the Israelites of their history of oppression.

The God who would deliver them had predicted their exile (v. 6).

Isaiah describes the celebration to take place when the land would be restored (vv. 7–12). This passage foretells the future deliverance of all God's people through the Messiah. Isaiah's words, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news" (v. 7), are repeated by the apostle Paul in Romans 10:15. This good news—Israel's restoration and the coming Messiah—will be carried over the mountains for all to hear.

Both Gordon and Moody were passionate about preaching the imminent Second Coming of Christ that would usher in Jesus' thousand-year rule and reign over the New Jerusalem. When the Lord returns, we too will see Him with our own eyes (v. 8).

► The book of Isaiah and theology about the end times can be challenging to understand. Use free online resources like the videos from *The Bible Project* to help you understand God's Word even better.

Pray with Us

Please lift up in prayer the ministry of Moody Radio, headed by vice president Doug Hastings. We pray for God's blessing on its 37 stations, 1,700 affiliates, digital channels and podcasts, and on its faithful listeners across the globe.

He Began a Good Work in You

Read Philippians 1:1–11

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. —Philippians 1:6

Over Moody Bible Institute's 134-year history there have been hundreds of faculty members who have influenced the lives of future Christian ministry leaders. In July 2019, Dr. Rosalie de Rosset celebrated 50 years of teaching. During her tenure, she has taught more than 8,000 students. When I asked her about her favorite passage of Scripture she replied, "Nothing seems more true of my life than Philippians 1:6."

This verse comes in the middle of Paul's greeting to the believers in Philippi, "all God's holy people in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). He opens with a prayer of thankfulness to the Philippians for their generosity and faithfulness while he has been in prison (v. 7). He expresses his confidence that God has started a good work in them and will continue to see it through "until the day of Christ Jesus" (v. 6).

Paul's emphasis in verse 11 is not on the Philippians, but rather it is on God! Paul believes that it is only through God's grace that anything good will become of them. Notice his

prayer that the Philippian church will be shaped by God's love (v. 9), able to discern godly behavior (v. 19), be pure and blameless (v. 10), and produce fruit of righteousness (v. 11). How? It is only "through Jesus Christ" and to give "glory and praise" to God (v. 11). De Rosset says, "I think of these words [Phil. 1:6] often because like many, my life has been a series of what I would call stumblings forward, taking escapes and being brought back. Each decade of my life is a new lesson in obedience, experiencing greater conviction, wanting more to obey and love the Lord and to follow Him more profoundly no matter what. What rings in my soul most fully and moves me most deeply is that He performed the work in my life."

► Since the day you were born, God was beginning a good work in you. God is still working in your life to complete what He started. Each decade and each moment of your life is a testimony of what He has done. Praise Him for your journey.

Pray with Us

Thank the Lord for His encouraging words in today's reading. We are grateful for our journey with Him, for His work in our lives, and for His assurance that this work will be carried on "to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

By Faith Alone

Read Romans 1:11–17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. —Romans 1:16

One of the major reformers of Christianity was the German monk Martin Luther. Before he posted his 95 Theses on the church doors in 1517, protesting the church's corruption, Luther wrestled with his own salvation. He was tormented by his own sinfulness, God's judgment, and the way to salvation. While searching for answers, he read the beginning of Paul's epistle to the Romans, and the gospel finally made sense to him.

In Romans, Paul was writing to dear friends and relatives and was excited to announce that he would soon be visiting them. He hoped that his visit would be edifying for them and other believers in Rome (vv. 11–12). He was also eager to preach the gospel to all those who were willing to listen (vv. 14–15). Paul made it abundantly clear that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 16).

Paul understood that some, especially those living in a hostile environment, might be timid, even fearful, about expressing their faith.

However, this was not the case for those in Rome, nor was it the case with Paul. He was adamant about proclaiming that a right standing before God, or righteousness, comes through *Sola Fide*, faith in Christ alone. Here Paul explains that righteousness is “by faith from first to last” (v. 17).

When Martin Luther came across this theological concept, his life was changed forever. He says, “Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn . . . this passage of Paul became to me a gate of heaven.”

► Are you afraid to express your faith? We live in a culture that can be antagonistic toward Christianity. But we are not to be ashamed of the gospel! We are saved by the grace of God, an even greater reason not to be ashamed of the gospel and live rightly!

Pray with Us

What a wonderful example Paul gives us today with his zeal for missions! As we reflect on Romans 1, ask God that we also will be eager to preach the gospel to all people's groups, everywhere.

I Will Be Content

Read Philippians 4:4–13

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.—Philippians 4:11

Although blind from infancy, Fanny Crosby went on to write more than 9,000 hymns, many of which are still sung today, including: “Blessed Assurance,” “All the Way My Savior Leads Me,” “To God Be the Glory,” and “Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross.” A well known poet, she became friends with many members of Congress and several Presidents. Crosby refused to be bitter because of her disability. At age eight she wrote: *Oh, what a happy soul I am, although I cannot see! I am resolved that in this world, Contented I will be.*

In our text today, Paul shared his own life lessons on contentment. He had learned that it was not dependent on his circumstances (v. 11). Throughout his lifetime Paul had experienced a multitude of setbacks, disappointments, and cruel punishment (v. 12). He has known times of need and times of plenty (v. 12). Nonetheless, he had learned not to let those negative experiences define him. How? He says, “I have learned the secret of

being content” (v. 12). In verse 13, he explains how: “I can do all this through Him who gives me strength” (v. 13). By focusing on God and through His strength, Paul was able to overcome.

At the beginning of today’s passage, in verse 4, Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” This does not mean Paul always felt emotionally happy, but it does mean that he had a deep joy based on his relationship with God. He also spent time in prayer and thanksgiving, letting God know everything that was on his heart (vv. 6–7). Here we can learn one of the most valuable lessons in life: Be content because you can do anything through Christ who gives you strength.

► Some of our readers, more than 4,000 of you, are serving time in prison. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we want to join in prayer for you today. We pray that you will feel God’s presence and His strength. May God use this time in your life to shape you for His glory.

Pray with Us

Ask God to show you what true contentment looks like and how to be content in your specific circumstances. May we remember to lift up one another in prayer and help those going through trials and hardships.

Blood-Bought Grace

Read Romans 8:28–39

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?—Romans 8:32

John Piper, author, speaker, and pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, is known for his passion and zeal. Recently, he spoke on his favorite verse in the Bible, Romans 8:32. “When all is said and done, we owe every good in our lives to blood-bought grace,” Piper says. “The logic of that verse is the most beautiful logic in the universe.” He goes on to say that since God did not spare even His own Son, “He will most certainly give us absolutely everything we need to get to heaven and glorify His name.”

Verse 32 comes as further explanation to the believers in Rome that all things work together for good (v. 28). This is not just positive thinking. Paul bases this declaration on the solid fact that God is ultimately sovereign (vv. 28–31). In verse 32, Paul describes how God sacrificially and selflessly offered His own Son, Jesus, to die for us. He then asks a series of five rhetorical questions (vv. 31–34). Paul is pushing his point, digging into the character of

God, and wanting it to sink deeply into the hearts of his readers: Our God is the final judge (v. 33) and those who believe in Jesus will not be condemned because Christ Himself is interceding on our behalf (v. 34).

Nothing in heaven or on earth can separate God’s powerful love from us (vv. 35–39)! Our justification through faith is a direct result of God not sparing His own Son, but sacrificing Him to pay our debt (v. 32). Piper concludes, “Without the cross, nothing, nothing good for us. Only hell. If you didn’t wake up in hell this morning, it was a good day. It was because He did not spare His own Son.”

► Reflecting on your own life, what were some difficult events that God ultimately used for good? Perhaps it was a letter of rejection, a failed marriage, or a death of a loved one. Even in the midst of our difficulties God is still for us (v. 31). Remember, He is in your corner because He freely gave up His Son for you.

Pray with Us

Looking at your life, are you able to thank God for the suffering and hardships in your past? The Word of God says that all things (not only good things) come together for good for those who love God. Do you believe it?

Be a Difference-Maker

Read John 16:25–33

*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart!
I have overcome the world.—John 16:33*

Moody's seventh president, Joseph M. Stowell, received plenty of attention growing up as a pastor's kid. However, he admits it was not always the good kind of notoriety. Congregants expected the young Stowell to stand up straight and be an example. The young Joe would often get into mischief. He often wished blending in would have been easy, but as he began to make his faith his own he realized that the Lord had called him to be different in another way.

In John's gospel, Jesus talked about being different in a world that seeks conformity. He had just finished a lengthy discourse with His closest friends about His imminent departure. They did not fully grasp it yet, but His ministry on earth was coming to an end. He had been speaking in figurative language, but in John 16:25–28 He began to address their misconceptions. It wasn't until then that the disciples had begun to believe that Jesus came from God (v. 30).

Jesus warned them that a time would come when their belief in Him as the true Messiah and Redeemer would be tested (vv. 31–32). However, Jesus gave them the hope that He knew what they needed, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (v. 33). Stowell comments, "Following Christ has never been about 'blending in.' Following Him means to be like Him, to respond to life and relate to people the way He did. . . . You will no doubt have opportunities to be different—to go against the flow. Don't be intimidated. Make a difference by daring to be different for Jesus." Strive to be a Jesus-follower-difference-maker.

► Did you notice the Bible doesn't say in this world you *may* have trouble? It says you *will* have trouble. Being a difference-maker is hard work. It can be risky and uncomfortable. It may cost you friendships, relationships, or a job. But rest assured that Jesus has overcome the world and will help you become a difference maker for Him.

Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, on behalf of us all at Moody, would like to thank you, our faithful friends, for your prayer and financial partnership with Moody's ministries. He welcomes your prayers for the continued financial health of MBI.

Glorifying God No Matter What

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19–27

They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. — 1 Corinthians 9:25

Through her ministry, Joni & Friends, Joni Eareckson Tada shares the hope of the gospel and gives practical help to people impacted by disability. Her passion comes from personal experience. In 1967, at age 17, Joni took a dive that left her a quadriplegic. Her story became a movie and then a ministry. In 2018, Joni announced that the cancer she thought had gone into remission had returned. During this challenging and exhausting season, Joni said God’s Word helped her thrive. In a recent interview she referred to First Corinthians 9:25 as her inspiration to keep fighting for the eternal prize.

In today’s text, Paul was explaining his passion for ministry to the believers in Corinth. He was committed to proclaiming the gospel as often as he was able. He summed up his approach by stating, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some” (v. 22). Of course, there were theological boundaries that Paul would apply to this statement, but

he would always go the extra mile to reach people with hope found in Christ.

Not surprisingly, in verses 24–27, Paul used sports metaphors to make his point. Runners and boxers go “into strict training” (v. 25) to win rewards that will eventually perish and be forgotten. In the original language this phrase referred to athletes who practiced chastity and restraint in diet. Paul had chosen a similar approach to self-discipline and exhibited a steadfast commitment to spreading the gospel. Paul wasn’t striving for a temporary, reward, but for a crown that would last for eternity! As we support others through the battles in their lives, remember we are doing so not for earthly crowns but for heavenly rewards that will last for eternity.

► If you, or someone you know, has been impacted by cancer or another illness, be encouraged by Paul’s words. Pray today for those in your life who are facing this fight.

Pray with Us

The Alumni Association works to stay connected with former students. Will you pray for their staff as they nurture Moody’s relationship with alumni through the *Moody Alumni & Friends* magazine, class reunions, and Founder’s Week?

Examine the Scriptures

Read Acts 17:10–15

They received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day. — Acts 17:11

As a teenager at Oxford, George Whitefield spent hours upon hours devouring the Scriptures, in both English and in their original languages. After reading the text, he would often pray over “every line and every word,” until it became a part of him. One biographer notes, “Whitefield’s spiritual devotion was established upon his immovable commitment to the Bible.”

The Bereans in Acts 17:10–15 had a similar passion for reading and learning God’s Word. When Paul and Silas visited them sometime around 51 AD, they were eager to hear the message of the traveling missionaries (v. 11). After they heard about the good news of Jesus, they had examined the Law and the Prophets, also known as the Old Testament Scriptures, to see if what Paul and Silas were saying was true.

They wanted to verify the Hebrew Scripture for themselves, to see if it was fulfilled in Christ. Both the Jews and prominent Greeks living in Berea came to realize that Jesus was indeed the

one, true Savior (v. 12). The Bereans’ open posture and their willingness to examine the Scriptures changed not only their lives but also their community. Opposition would soon filter in from Thessalonica (v. 13), but these new believers remained steadfast and unwavering in their faith about God and what the Scriptures said about Him.

Nearly 1700 years later, the great evangelist George Whitefield expressed the importance of studying God’s Word. He said, “If we once get above our Bibles and cease making the written Word of God our sole rule both as to faith and practice, we shall soon lie open to all manner of delusion and be in great danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.”

We should never underestimate the importance of studying God’s Word.

► It can be helpful to study the Bible in a larger, more structured setting. Is there a Bible study you can join? Or, maybe you can enroll in an online Bible or theology class?

Pray with Us

Donations that come to Moody are certainly gifts from our Father. So are the people who help process these gifts—our Stewardship department staff. Will you encourage them in prayer today?

From Shyness to Boldness

Read Exodus 4:1–12

*In their hearts humans plan their course,
but the Lord establishes their steps.—Proverbs 16:9*

Dr. Erwin Lutzer served as senior pastor of Chicago's Moody Church for 36 years. Preaching has been part of his life for decades, but many may not know that he had to overcome shyness. As a requirement to graduate from high school, students had to preach a sermon in front of the entire student body. Hesitant about his ability, Lutzer reflected on the life of Moses.

Moses' lack of confidence, described in our text today, was probably similar to how Lutzer felt during his teenage years. In verse one we learn that Moses expressed doubt about his ability to confront Pharaoh. He was terrified to speak before the leaders of Egypt. The Lord then used three distinct miracles to convince Moses to act: a staff and snake (vv. 2–5), a restored hand in a cloak (vv. 6–7), and changing the Nile water into blood (v. 9). "This," said the Lord, "is so that they may believe . . ." (v. 5). Each miracle was a powerful demonstration that God was with Moses. Even then,

Moses remained horrified about the prospect of returning to Pharaoh and speaking on behalf of God.

In verse 10, Moses expressed his doubts about his own ability. Notice God's question to Moses: "Who gave human beings their mouths?" (v. 11). We may not know exactly why Moses was so reluctant to speak and follow God's command, but I imagine many of us do the same thing all the time. We might not receive miraculous signs of God's power like Moses did, but God often urges us to do bold things for Him. How often do we deny His power and focus instead on our own insecurity? In verse 12, God gave Moses the confidence he needed: "I will help you." Whether it is shyness, low self-confidence, or timidity, the Lord will be with you.

► Do you get nervous? In these times, we need to rely on God's courage and boldness. Let the words of the Lord ring in your heart: "Now go. I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

Pray with Us

We invite you to support in prayer the faithful service of pastors across the country who stay true to the Scripture and bless their congregations with the powerful preaching of God's Word.

God Shows No Partiality

Read Acts 10:23–48

I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation. — Acts 10:34–35

Mary McLeod Bethune was the 15th of 17 children, the first of her parent's children born out of slavery. Mary attended Moody Bible Institute in 1895, where she prepared for missionary service to Africa. Unfortunately, her application was denied by a mission board because of her race. In the face of this devastating news, the young woman graciously replied, "I am so glad He has counted me worthy to lay this Great Command upon my heart. I am so glad He did not designate any particular color to go." Refusing to be discouraged, Bethune lived a life devoted to God's service. She founded a school/college and provided counsel on race issues to several United States Presidents. Her life glorified God!

Our text today speaks to one of the earliest encounters Christians faced when dealing with race and diversity. Peter and Cornelius were about as different as could be. One was Jewish, the other Gentile. Peter most likely grew up lower to middle class, experiencing Jewish foods and customs.

Cornelius most likely grew up wealthy (Acts 10:1–2). However, God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, purposely brought the unlikely pair together (vv. 30–33), teaching them that God shows no partiality (v. 34).

There was a time when Peter would have wanted nothing to do with Cornelius or his family and friends (vv. 27–29). Associating with a Gentile was against Jewish law (v. 28). All he would have seen was their differences. God was the reason the two came together. Peter realized that if God accepts anyone without exception, he too should accept and love them as well (vv. 34–35). God accepts people from "every nation" (v. 35). He wanted Peter (and us) to take off the faulty human lens of viewing the world and to see people as He does.

▶ God wants us to get out of our comfort zone and love those with whom we normally wouldn't connect. Be intentional this week and do something that will give you a different perspective.

Pray with Us

Nearing the end of our study, we pray that these Bible readings and favorite Scripture passages of faithful Christians have built up your faith, increased your love for God's Word, and inspired you by examples of fellow believers.

Doing His Will

Read Hebrews 13:20–25

May he work in us what is pleasing to him.—Hebrews 13:21

This month we have been inspired by the examples of fellow believers. Each of them was committed to reading God's Word and understood its transformative power. Evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody often said, "The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives." He believed in studying the Bible, so it could be proclaimed to the lost. He once said, "If this world is going to be reached, I am convinced that it must be done by men and women of average talent." Thus began his ministry of book publishing, founding Bible schools, and evangelistic outreach. Moody's desire was to educate and equip the average person to be a soul winner and to do extraordinary feats for God's glory.

In today's text, the author of Hebrews has a similar desire for his readers. Verse 20 begins with a reminder that the main activator, the God of peace, has already done an amazing work in their midst: brought Jesus back from the dead. In verse

21, the author asks God to equip the recipients of this letter with every good thing to do God's will and that God may do a mighty work in them. This work will be honoring and pleasing to Him.

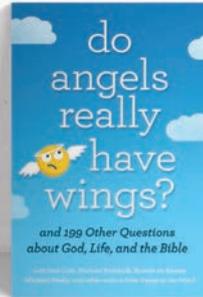
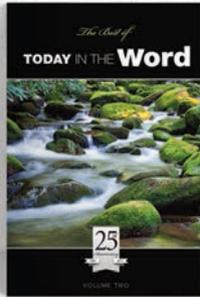
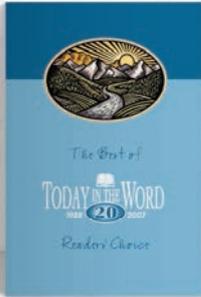
Moody's legacy is one of loving the Bible and doing God's will. While Moody served the Lord, God was doing a mighty work in him. He continually made Moody into an advocate for Jesus and a leader in proclaiming the gospel. As you continue to grow in your walk with the Lord, allow Him to do a mighty work in you, work that is pleasing to Him.

► What has God taught you this month? Thumb through the previous days. Which story of faith stood out to you and why? What passages of Scripture did the Lord place on your heart and mind? As you go through your days, ministry, and interactions with others, give thanks for those who have followed by faith and left a legacy for us!

Pray with Us

In conclusion of our prayer journey this month, we ask the Lord to help us remember and apply what He has taught us through the Bible and the faith walk of other Christians. Thank the Lord for the wonderful legacy of faith through the ages!

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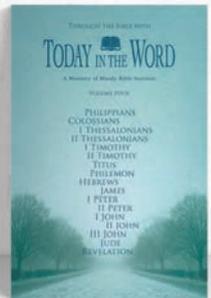
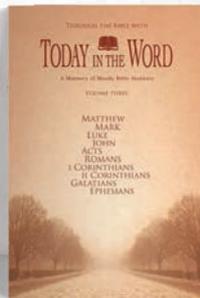
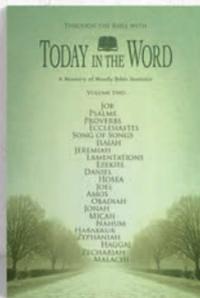
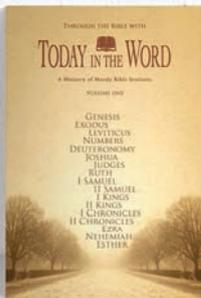


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