

NOVEMBER 2015

TODAY IN THE **Word**

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2 Corinthians 5:1



There's No Place Like Home:
Longing for the Kingdom of God

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TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Longing for Home



When Dorothy clicked her heels and whispered, "There's no place like home," she was expressing her heartfelt desire to return to Kansas.

At some time or another, most of us have felt that same aching desire to go home. For me, the word *home* brings to mind many different places. Growing up, my home was in Nebraska. Cheryl and I have made homes in Texas, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, and now Illinois. Each place became home to me because I was with the people I loved.

In their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, the Israelites were instructed to construct a dwelling place for God, and He would go with them even while they wandered in the wilderness. This dwelling, the tabernacle, was a beautiful tent made of rich fabrics. Like the people themselves, it could be moved from place to place.

The Gospel of John uses this same word for "tabernacle," *dwelling*, to describe how Jesus made this world His temporal home. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14). The Son of God was here to dwell with people, to show them how to be in a relationship with God that would transform their lives and their understanding of home.

Later in John's Gospel, Jesus picks up on the themes of "tabernacle" and "dwelling." He told His followers that their ultimate home was with God: "In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you" (14:2). Our relationship with God one day will be even more glorious and intimate than anything we can imagine now.

Our human longing for home is not just a desire to return to a physical location. It can also be understood as an expression of our spiritual longing. In Hebrews, the author distinguishes between our longing for a physical location and our hunger for the eternal: "For here we have not a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come" (13:14). Our hearts do not long for one particular physical place, but for a "city" we have never seen.

Ultimately, our longing for home is our spiritual desire to be forever united with our Heavenly Father in our eternal home. An old gospel song says it well, "This world is not my home. I'm just a-passin' through. My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me, from heaven's open door. And I can't feel at home in this world anymore." One day, if you know Him, Jesus Himself will welcome you home.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



Our Vagabond God

The Bible frequently describes God's people as exiles. This was the way the patriarch Jacob saw himself. He described his life as a pilgrimage (Gen. 47:9). Like Abraham, Jacob lived in the land God had promised to give him as an alien (Heb. 11:13). The church has also been called to the pilgrim life. We do this by living in a way that sets us apart from the pagan values of the world around us.

By living this way, we are imitating our Lord and Savior. Although He made the world, there was no place for Him in it. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He was dependent upon the hospitality of an innkeeper. His mother Mary laid him in a manger "because there was no guest room available for them" (Luke 2:7). During His earthly ministry, Jesus lived an itinerant life, moving from place to place. He relied on the generosity of others to care for His needs (Matt. 27:55). He warned one prospective disciple: "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20).

This vagabond life merely foreshadowed an even greater alienation. Jesus came to the world He had made, and that world did not recognize Him (John 1:10). He came to His own people, and they rejected Him (John 1:11). In the final hours of His earthly ministry, even His own disciples

refused to acknowledge Him. Those who were closest to Him also abandoned and disowned Him (Mark 14:50; Matt. 26:56-75). Jesus told Pontius Pilate that He was a king but that His kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:36). Jesus was the ultimate outsider.

Like Jesus, we are both at home and out of place in this world. Because it is God's world, we have been called to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Like the Patriarchs who were promised a homeland, we have been promised a kingdom (Luke 22:29). But as we wait for the fulfillment of that promise, we must live "as foreigners and exiles" (1 Peter 2:11). Our vagabond calling demands that we sometimes live at odds with ourselves, abstaining from the sinful desires that wage war within us. To do this we must rely upon the Holy Spirit to say no to the impulses of the sinful nature.

This calling may also demand that we live at odds with the world around us. When the world's morals conflict with God's standard, we must reject them. We are to "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:12).

For Further Study

To learn more, read *Joyful Exiles: Life in Christ on the Dangerous Edge of Things* by James M. Houston (InterVarsity).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Maftter

A Grateful Heart

If thankfulness could be implemented in an app, I would download it right away.

That's because thanksgiving doesn't come naturally or easily to me. The difficult circumstances or struggles that I go through often destroy the sense of gratitude for God's love and goodness. Lack of thankfulness clouds my relationship with the Lord, and I start complaining.

We all need a godly perspective on ourselves, our lives, and our work if we are to have a grateful heart. Then we can thank God even for those times in the wilderness, and we can find His mercy and meaning in life's difficulties. Here at *Today in the Word*, we have something better than a thankfulness app to give us that godly perspective on our work at Moody—your letters and emails. They fill our hearts with gratitude and remind us that our devotional is not a project but a ministry. Thank you all who wrote to us this year sharing your triumphs and trials, as well as the way *Today in the Word* helps you in your daily walk with Christ.

This month, when we celebrate Thanksgiving, we would like to feature some highlights from our readers' letters, hoping they will encourage you as they have encouraged all of us at *Today in the Word*. Happy Thanksgiving!

I read Today in the Word because it offers me a "fresh serving" of the Bread of Life to nourish, guide, and challenge me each day. I appreciate the mix of Bible commentary, illustrations, and applications. I appreciate your devotional very much. I appreciate too that it is a "digestible" portion: not too long but certainly enough to help feed my soul. Thanks for the job you do. I read it in print form. I prefer to hold it in my hands.

—Dave (via email)

I knew and believed about death and eternal life for a Christian, but when my 95-year-old mom went to be with the Lord in April 2010, and I was at her bedside, I realized the miraculous blessing the Lord has given us who believe in Him and His Word, as you have wonderfully explained in this devotional today [July 12, 2015]. Thank you again for your wonderful ministry to us.

—Mona (via email)

I am a minister in a Jewish community, and I picked up Today in the Word at a Jews for Jesus event at Moody. I'm hooked on it. I went to seminary and I've been in ministry for 25+ years. I love the combination—it has good illustrations, context, exegesis, and practical application. It's indispensable to me.

—Donald (via phone call)

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TODAY IN THE Word

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

There's No Place Like Home: Longing for the Kingdom of God

Longing for home permeates our souls. We all want to find that beautiful place where we feel welcome and free, where we can be ourselves. From country songs to the television series *Lost*, from *The Wizard of Oz* to literature's great houses described by Evelyn Waugh, Edith Wharton, Franz Kafka, Astrid Lindgren, Emily Bronte, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and other writers—our culture reflects this search for home sweet home.

This month in *Today in the Word*, we'll study the Bible's take on the notion of home, and we will see why this notion is so elusive here on earth. We'll read about the humanity's first home and its loss, and we'll look at God's promise of home to Israel and the tragedy of exile from home. We will be encouraged by the hope of the new family and the new dwelling place for believers. And finally, we'll rejoice at the eternal home, the new inheritance that awaits us in the presence of the Lord.

We pray that this month's study will fill you with thankfulness and hope as we look forward to "the Holy City, the New Jerusalem" mentioned in Revelation 21. We at *Today in the Word* are certainly thankful for our readers, the living stones of the household of God, as we look ahead to dwelling together in a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

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The First Home: The Garden

In Marilynne Robinson's novel *Home*, the Boughton family home has a "flat face . . . and peaked brows over the windows." The house is not just another address in Gilead, Iowa. Like a character in the novel, it is nearly human. When brownies bake in the oven, when the fragrance of chicken and dumplings fills the house, the house comforts and consoles. "This house has a soul that loves us all, no matter what."

Many of us understand how the idea of *home* has the capacity to make us feel loved or lonely, welcomed or exiled. How does home exercise such power over our lives? We find the answer in our first home—the Garden. Though God's image bearers had been commanded to "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28), humanity was never meant for a nomadic existence. God did not set the first man and the first woman on a wide, open road

and demand, *Enjoy! Explore! Find the end of the rainbow!* Rather, in Genesis 2, He "implaces" them—to use a word from the theologian Craig Bartholomew. He puts them in a garden, which He Himself has carefully cultivated. He gives them an address: Eden, which means "delight."

I long to dwell in
your tent forever.

Psalm 61:4

As a gift of love, God gave Adam and Eve one cultivable plot of land to tend and to till. Twice, the text mentions that God "put" Adam and Eve in the garden. The first time the word is used (in verse 8), the word means "placed." God "put" humanity in the garden,

much like we "put" our shoes in the closet. But the second time the word, "put" is used (in verse 15), it is a different Hebrew word, implying "rest" or "safety" or "dedicated to God."

Home doesn't just describe where we've landed; it is shelter given by God.

Apply the Word

Place in the Bible is not a neutral concept. As Craig Bartholomew writes in his book *Where Mortals Dwell*, place has theological meaning. The Garden, as our first home, was a divine gift where we were meant to enjoy God's presence. "One of the glories of being human and creaturely," writes Bartholomew, "is to be implaced." We are people who long to be home—with God.

Pray with Us

Paul Brackley, Brenda Crump, and Stephen Richardson in Procurement Services make sure employees have everything necessary for effective service on Moody's Chicago campus. We are grateful for their work and ask you to pray for them.

The First Parent: The Creator

In Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, *Frankenstein*, Dr. Victor Frankenstein creates a monster in his laboratory with a hideous appearance. Initially, Frankenstein flees in horror from his creation, but the monster eventually finds Frankenstein to make of him certain demands. He wants a female companion. When Frankenstein refuses, the monster exacts murderous revenge on his creator for his treason. Shelley's novel depicts the horror of a creature wielding power over his creator.

Scripture tells us that God asserts His power and prerogative over creation by virtue of His role as Creator. Creation is our first home, and God is our first parent. If it was His to design, it is also His to command. No creation story spells out divine authority better than the final chapters of Job.

In our passage today, Job is a man who has endured horrible suffering. He calls God as a witness in the case he is mak-

ing for his own innocence (and divine mistreatment). He, the child, questions God, the parent—an act he will later interpret as great foolishness (see Job 40:3–5).

God is the eternally present I AM, and as Creator, He predates the heavens and the earth. Yet He is intimately involved with their formation. In our reading today, God describes the acts of creation using two domestic images: first, as an act of architecture (vv. 4–7, 10); second, as an act of childbirth (vv. 8, 9). As the architect of home, God set it on its foundations, determined its measurements, and laid the cornerstone.

As the primordial parent, God labored to bring forth creation. When the sea “burst forth from the womb,” God swaddled it in clouds and darkness, as a mother swaddles her newborn baby.

Creation, as both divine craftsmanship and offspring, attests to God's love as well as to His authority.

This is what the LORD says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: ...
“You are mine.”

Isaiah 43:1

Apply the Word

The impulse of sin is to divide God's love from God's authority. Just like Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit, we can be tempted to want God's gifts without the bother of God's commands. The Bible invites us to see God's rule as God's gift. Home is a place where God exercises His authority. We belong there, for we belong obediently to Him.

Pray with Us

As Christians, we can use our skills and training to glorify God at the workplace. One example is Janet Stiven, vice president and general counsel. While you pray, ask for God's guidance as she uses her legal expertise to serve Moody's ministries.

The First Desire: A Longing for Home

Before she died in 2008 at the age of 86, Ms. Edith Macefield refused \$1 million from commercial developers to vacate her Seattle home. She watched the city rise around her, but in opposition to the forward march of urban development, she clung tightly to her 600-square-foot bungalow. Money couldn't convince Ms. Macefield to move.

Ms. Macefield's longing for home was tied to one small plot of land in the middle of a large American city. But the universal human longing for home, as the Bible illustrates, is more than a desire for four walls and acreage. It certainly includes the desire for physical place, but home in the Bible signifies what we enjoy in the presence of God. Home—without God—is not really home at all.

In the psalm we read today, we are reminded that in the Old Testament, the tabernacle (and later the temple), was considered by the Jews as God's dwelling

place. As a kind of reverse image of the creation accounts, in which God makes a home for men and women on the earth, the tabernacle and temple were God's instructions to humanity to make a home for Him on earth. Throughout the year, the Israelites made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, offering worship sacrifices of atonement and thanksgiving.

We are filled with
the good things of
your house, of your
holy temple.

Psalm 65:4

The psalmist describes the intensity of his longing to serve in the temple courts—and not just to serve, but to dwell! He faints for permanent proximity to God, knowing that in God's presence, there is

joy greater than sorrow, strength greater than pain. To be in God's house, singing praise, is to be rightfully at home.

Even the sparrow knows these truths. Given the choice to make her nest anywhere, she chooses to weave a nest of refuge and safety for her young at the altar in the temple's outer courtyard.

Apply the Word

Because God's Holy Spirit now indwells His people, we can be home anywhere! This is a comfort when we feel far from home. Maybe you've recently moved to a new city. Maybe the city in which you've lived a long time has dramatically changed, making it no longer feel like home. Wherever you are, God is with you. You can experience the joy and stability He offers.

Pray with Us

Spiritual Enrichment Week starts today—a special time when Moody students take time away from the classroom to attend a series of conferences with gifted speakers. Please pray for Moody's president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, as he opens the first session.

Cast Out: The Loss of Home

In 2014, Elvira Sergeyeva, along with her aging mother and infant daughter, fled the Donetsk region in Eastern Ukraine. She is one of more than one million Ukrainians who have been forced to leave their home because of war in the region. Like many who have fled, she is not sure that she will ever be able to come home. We *have no homeland*, she and many other Ukrainian refugees lament.

If home is God's gift to His people, the loss of home is a great curse. In our reading today, we see two scenes of forced exile. First, as consequence for their disobedience, Adam and Eve are cast from the Garden of Eden without hope of return. Second, Cain is cursed to a lifetime of wandering for his crime of murder.

In both of these accounts, more than land is at stake in the divine judgments. Adam, Eve, and Cain are also removed from the presence of God, which is the most severe aspect of their sentence. Cain said the

dual loss is a punishment greater than he can bear.

"Displacement is at the heart of God's judgment," theologian Craig Bartholomew wrote. As we have already seen in our previous readings, *place* has theological significance in the Bible. Being "put in place" is a divine gift, and home is a place of refuge and safety where we were made to enjoy God's presence. Without it, we are vulnerable to danger.

Because *place* has theological importance, *exile* is also theological. Place and divine presence are interconnected in the biblical narrative, and they should be understood together. It's why, as Bartholomew writes, "the quest for landedness" forms the heart of the biblical narrative.

This will be much of the focus of this month's study: the promise we have of home, as the fulfillment of both place and divine presence.

Today, you are
driving me from
the land, and I will
be hidden from
your presence.

Genesis 4:14

Apply the Word

God is present with us through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Because divine presence was renewed at Pentecost (see Acts 2), we can be home anywhere. But this is only partial fulfillment of God's future promises. We can also look forward to entering the heavenly city, which is being prepared for us as eternal residence (see Revelation 21). This will be our perfect future home.

Pray with Us

As our students participate in Spiritual Enrichment Week on Moody's Chicago campus, we use this occasion to support them in prayer. Ask God to teach them His ways, to fill them with His Spirit, and guide them in their ministry calling.

A Great Nation: The Promise of Home

Isabel Wilkerson's book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, traces the pilgrim journeys of three black families who left the South during the Great Migration. Between the years of 1915 and 1970, some six million blacks left the South, hoping they would find greater freedom and flourishing in cities like New York and Chicago and Detroit. Unfortunately, many of their hopes were disappointed. These northern cities weren't the Promised Land after all.

For these black families, the choice to leave home, without guarantee that life in the North would be better than the South, posed enormous risk and required tremendous courage. Abraham's faith and courage are apparent when he obeyed God's command to leave "your country, your people and your father's household" (v. 1)—especially considering the context of his Mesopotamian culture. Though it's hardly unusual today for people to leave their families of origin to pursue educational or career opportunities, in ancient times, people derived

their identity from family and clan. They simply didn't leave.

Moreover, until this point in the book of Genesis, every goodbye is a tragic scene: when Adam and Eve leave the Garden, when Cain is cast out to wander, and when the construction of the Tower of Babel is abandoned and the people are scattered by God (cf. 11:8). Leaving seems to be cause for heartache. Yet in Genesis 12, a new narrative begins. Abraham and his family are not cast out from their homeland because of sin and rebellion. They are obeying God's command and trusting in God's promise.

Whatever fears Abraham might have had, they are reassured by God's faithful oath: "I will bless you" (v. 2).

The writer of the book of Hebrews describes Abraham's faith as an act of anticipation. He had the courage to leave because he anticipated the *home* God had promised him.

By faith Abraham,
when called to go
to a place he would
later receive as his
inheritance, obeyed
and went.

Hebrews 11:8

Apply the Word

In Hebrews 11, faith is described as the ability to see the invisible and hope for the eternal. In many ways, our search of home is just this kind of exercise. We recognize that our apartments and homes, our cities, and our countries are not our final home. We are all exiles and pilgrims in search of the Promised Land (see Heb. 11:16).

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayer time the service of Moody's Public Safety officers on our Chicago campus. Thank God for Justin Jansma, Ryan Jenkins, and Timothy Kirkpatrick and their work as a testimony of true Christian service.

Sojourners: The Wait for Home

HTTP, or Hypertext Transfer Protocol, was created in 1991 and upgraded eight years later. In 2015, HTTP/2 was published, allowing the Internet to transport data even more quickly between the browser and server. Consumers will keep demanding that the Internet get faster: when we measure our lives in nanoseconds, waiting is the great curse.

What seems to be clear in the Bible, however, especially in Abraham's story, is that God makes His people wait. He doesn't share human urgency. He isn't always interested in immediacy. Abraham wait-

ed twenty-five years to hold Isaac, the son whom God had promised to him. Despite his faith, decades after leaving Haran, his hope languished; the years of barrenness had made their hope sometimes seem too improbable: "I remain childless," Abram reminds God in our reading today, wondering when God will make good on His word (v. 3).

Does [God] speak
and then not act?
Does he promise
and not fulfill?

Numbers 23:19

In this scene, God also tells Abram that his family, who has been promised the inheritance of "home," will have to wait on that fulfillment as well. Before Abraham's descendants ever settle into the land more permanently, they will face an exile of 400 years. What's more, God assures that their years of estrangement will be ones of suffering and affliction.

Where is the good news? Why does God make His people wait on His promises? Although we can't always understand God's intentions, we can affirm His trustworthiness. God understood Abram's fear,

confusion, and inner turmoil as he waited in the dark. And to prove His intention to make good on every word He had spoken to Abram, the Lord made a lasting oath—a covenant. He was the blazing torch that walked through the bisected animals. This covenant was His promise: *Let it be so done to me, if I do not keep my word.*

Apply the Word

Home sometimes feels like longing and disappointment. Maybe we wanted marriage, but singleness stretches on. Maybe we wanted children but suffered the grief of barrenness. Maybe death or divorce has stolen our hope, and we wonder about God's goodness. When we wait (and suffer), we build faith as we consider His promises. He is our shield, our very great reward.

Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for the Public Safety staff on the Chicago campus, we lift up Jacob Muscat, Beau Pieniak, and Brian Stoffer and their families before the Lord today. We pray for their physical health and spiritual growth.

Final Breath: Buried at Home

In Marilynne Robinson's novel *Gilead*, the narrator, John Ames, tells a story from his childhood of traveling with his father to locate his grandfather's grave. Years before his grandfather's death, his father and grandfather had quarreled, and no reconciliation had been made. Ames's father was driven to find the grave and to put it—and the past—to rights. He understood the sacred connection to the burial plot and the family history.

Burial plots also feature prominently in the book of Genesis. In fact, Abraham's family burial plot is one of only two pieces of property that the family owns by the end of the book—despite having been promised a vast territory in which they will form a great nation (see Gen. 15:18–21). They own a small plot of land in the town of Shechem, and they own a cave in a field belonging to Ephron the Hittite, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah are buried.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They ... were foreigners and strangers on earth.

Hebrews 11:13

The family burial plot is their postage stamp of promise. It is a small tract of land reminding them that God has promised vastly more territory by His word. And though Jacob was far from home when he drew his last breath, though he had been a man known less for his stability and more for his transience, he gave important burial instructions to his sons. *Take me home.* His sons return with his body to Canaan, heeding his request.

Genesis ends with another death: the death of Joseph. And although Joseph also requests to be buried in the land of promise, the book closes with a narrative

clap of ominous thunder: "And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt" (v. 26). Joseph was buried *far from home*.

The people of God in Genesis, just like us, were destined for more hoping and waiting.

Apply the Word

Just like Abraham's family, faith is required for the in-between places: when we are waiting on God's promises and feel far from home. What promises are you waiting on? In this season of waiting and longing, express faith in God by thanking Him for His presence and trustworthiness. Praise Him for even a postage stamp of an answered promise that reminds you He is faithful.

Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek, VP and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, welcomes the prayers of the *Today in the Word* family for the development of new programs at the seminary, its faculty, and its ministry of training Christian leaders.

Forgotten People: The Despair of Home

International journalists have exposed the slave-like conditions many Nepalese workers are enduring in Qatar, which is slated to host the 2022 World Cup. In the desert heat, many have suffered heart failure; others have died from accidents. Workers have also complained that they have not been properly paid, that their passports have been confiscated, and that their living conditions are filthy.

Qatar indeed seems to be unjustly treating its migrant workers, but this modern example of injustice still does not compare to the brutality the Hebrews suffered in ancient Egypt. Not only were they subjected to slave labor; they were also victims of a royal campaign of genocide. The Pharaoh had ordered that every Hebrew baby boy be killed at birth.

The Hebrews were strangers in a strange land. The memory of Joseph had long since gone, and the lease on Egyptian goodwill had expired. Egypt now viewed

them as immigrants, and they were excluded from legal recourse. Hope seemed as far removed as home. Worse, they were not building their own great nation. Instead, they were making great the oppressor: building Egyptian cities and establishing Egyptian international prominence. Despair was like sand in their throats.

Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them. ... So shall your offspring be.

Genesis 15:5

If the story seems dark, if God seems utterly distant and aloof to suffering of His people, one clue in the text signals to us that He has not forsaken them: “But the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that

the land was filled with them” (v. 7).

God was tending to His garden of promise—seeds of redemption are starting to sprout! He had not exaggerated His goodness when telling Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as stars and sand. And if He has promised to bring them home, He will!

Apply the Word

The irony of Exodus 1 is that God’s fulfillment of His promise (to multiply His people) was the precise cause for their persecution. The Egyptians feared and mistreated the Israelites because they were so numerous! Our suffering isn’t evidence of God’s absence. Strangely, it can even coincide with His blessing. How can you see evidence of God’s faithfulness in the midst of your pain?

Pray with Us

Paul Santhouse, vice president of Publishing, requests your prayers for Moody Publishers and its teams. Today, would you pray for Content Development—Erik Peterson, Josh Reigel, and Judy Tollberg—and thank the Lord for sustaining this vital ministry of the printed word?

Promise of Rescue: The Hope of Home

Paul Kagame, a Tutsi exiled from Rwanda, grew up in an Ugandan refugee camp. Having virtually no political experience, he became president of Rwanda several years after the 1994 genocide, when hundreds of thousands of Tutsi and moderate Hutu died at the hand of their neighbors. Despite that bloody civil history and his autocratic nature, Kagame has nevertheless been credited for Rwanda's remarkable economic and political turnaround.

Twenty years ago, it might have seemed nearly impossible to make Rwanda "home" again to the Tutsi, but to international surprise, it is. One thing is clear: violence and oppression must end for people if they are to feel at "home." Justice is a necessary foundation for home.

In today's reading, the Israelites continue to endure cruel and unjust mistreatment by the Egyptians. Surprisingly, the text doesn't say that they presented their complaints directly to God or even explicitly

pleaded with Him for help. They haven't been faithful pray-ers. Scripture doesn't provide any evidence that they were the reason that God "learns" of their suffering when their cries and groans rise like bitter smoke. Nevertheless, as an expression of His grace and mercy, He pays attention to their suffering.

And what does
the LORD require of
you? To act justly
and to love mercy
and to walk humbly
with your God.

Micah 6:8

In fact, He hasn't stood idly by when Israelite baby boys were tossed mercilessly into the Nile. He hasn't been too busy with other world affairs to fail to notice the toil and sweat of their slave labor. He has seen, He has heard, and He will act decisively—not simply to rescue them from injustice—but to

honor the covenant He made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

Those words may have been uttered hundreds of years earlier, but God acknowledges their immediacy. He calls Himself "I AM WHO I AM" (3:14). He is God not only in the past but in the present, and He is a promise-keeping God.

Apply the Word

God's intervention reveals how the church can take social action. First, we must see the suffering of our neighbors. Then, we must hear their groaning and expand our compassion. Finally, we must act decisively. Consider partnering with an organization like World Relief or International Justice Mission that makes a "home" in the name of Jesus for the world's poor and oppressed.

Pray with Us

Keeping in prayer Moody Publishers teams, please add the Production employees to your prayer list—Ryan Lloyd and Randy Westerlund—as they produce publications to help believers grow in faith and know God better.

Petition for Presence: The Favor of Home

According to Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman's book, *NurtureShock*, children today are getting about an hour less sleep each night than children thirty years ago. Though today's children are busier both at school and after school, trying to keep pace with the competition for college admissions and career opportunities, their sleep deprivation contributes to poor academic performance, emotional issues, and physical diseases like obesity.

We are a culture in desperate need of rest. Rest is a shorthand way for describing the home that God promises to provide, not only for the people of Israel but for everyone who belongs to Christ.

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and delivered them from the backbreaking tedium of brickmaking, he promised them a land where they would enjoy rest from their enemies. According to His commands, they would also rest every seventh day, and the land would rest

every seventh year. While this rest was never fully claimed and enjoyed, as our key verse notes, a rest remains for us to enter and enjoy. It is our home to inherit.

Notice what makes this promised home a place of rest. It isn't simply the cessation of warfare and work. Rather, it is the enjoyment of God's presence. God, dwelling among His people, will provide unfailing rest.

There remains, then,
a Sabbath-rest for
the people of God
... Let us, therefore,
make every effort
to enter that rest.

Hebrews 4:9, 11

Notice that the suggestion that the Israelites would take the land without also having God's presence was a pronouncement of "distressing words" (v. 4). Moses stepped into the role of mediator to beg God to relent from this judgment. The geographical territory alone would never provide rest without the blessing of God's presence and favor as well.

God heeded Moses' intercession because he has found "favor" with God (v. 12). The Lord chooses to show compassion on Moses and His people.

Apply the Word

Rest, like all of God's gifts, cannot be earned. The Israelites were certainly not candidates for the heavenly Hall of Fame. They had already stolen rightful glory and praise from God for His miraculous deliverance from Egypt and given it to a golden calf they crafted themselves (see Exodus 22). But God's promises remained sure. Home is an example of God's grace.

Pray with Us

Next on our prayer list is Moody Publishers Fulfillment team, who work hard to ensure timely delivery of our readers' purchases. Michael Alcazar, Junico Arroz, Arthur Eastern, and Ernesto Laya will appreciate your prayers today.

Paralysis of Fear: The Failure of Home

As scientists continue to explore for extra-terrestrial life, some have recently shifted the focus of their search from the presence of water. Researchers have scoured 100,000 galaxies with sophisticated instruments to try to detect evidence of energy use. We don't know if "aliens" use the energy from their stars to power computers, says Jason T. Wright, a professor at Penn State University, but we do know that energy would be radiated away as heat.

In today's reading, we have the report from a very different kind of exploration. Twelve spies spent forty days exploring and studying the people and the physical landscape of the Promised Land. Their findings corroborate God's Word: "It does flow with milk and honey!" (13:27).

But despite this affirmation of God's faithful accounting of the nature of the land, the spies didn't trust His promise to help them conquer it. They saw only tall people and tall walls. In their own eyes, they were

as small and vulnerable as grasshoppers, certain to be crushed by the Canaanites. They were sure of their weakness instead of being confident in God's presence.

Believing half of God's word is not half-faith: it is complete doubt. The Israelites saw that the land was good, but they didn't trust God's power. They preferred slavery in Egypt, even death in the wilderness, to what they assumed would be slaughter in Canaan.

They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his promise.

Psalm 106:24

When we don't believe God's promises, we are despising and rejecting them. As our study this month

has already demonstrated, God intends to put His people in a place of safety and rest. He put humanity in a home in the Garden, and when they rejected His rules, He made a covenant to put Abraham's family in a home in the Promised Land. He sought to place and shelter His people, Israel. But He would not force His good gifts upon them—even the good and holy gift of home.

Apply the Word

In C. S. Lewis's parable *The Great Divorce*, the passengers of a bus are revealed to be ghosts. Given the chance to enter heaven, most refuse. They make excuses, citing reasons for preferring other places and other things. They are condemned by their own desires. We should pray today for greater longing to dwell with God. Let us not despise our land of Promise—our home.

Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer the rest of the Moody Publishers Fulfillment team today: Chieu Nguyen, James Seffinga, Matthew Tran, and Nguyen Tran. Ask for the Lord's blessing on their diligent service on Moody's Chicago campus.

Blessings and Curses: The Fragility of Home

William Zinsser, author of the bestselling book *On Writing Well*, rails against sentence clutter. He encourages writers to substitute weak adjective-noun constructions with more muscular nouns (e.g., “clone” rather than “exact copy”). He discourages dependence on adverbs when vivid verbs provide sentences with greater propulsion (e.g., “yammer” rather than “talk incessantly”).

In today’s passage, however, the adverbs emphasize the text’s meaning. In verse 1 in particular, the adverbs emphasize the quality of undivided obedience that God requires of His people. The Israelites aren’t asked to obey God when the mood strikes. They aren’t commanded to do their very religious best, exempting days of fatigue and frustration. Instead, they are asked to *fully* obey the LORD and to *carefully* follow all His commands. The adverbs in the sentence close any potential loopholes in God’s commands.

The setting for the book of Deuteronomy is the imminent inheritance of the Prom-

ised Land. After forty years of wilderness wandering, the generation of faithless fathers and mothers had died out, and Moses rehearses God’s commands and God’s promises. He reminds the people that God has sworn on oath to give them a good land but insists they must remain obedient.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

Galatians 3:13

God’s promises seem surprisingly conditional: *if you fully obey, then I will bless you with agricultural and civil flourishing, fertility, livestock and military dominance. But if you don’t, you will be tragically scattered and put up on Egyptian auction blocks. Your punishment will be so total in*

its effects that “no one will buy you” (v. 68).

At other points of the Old Testament narrative, home—as rest, safety, shelter, and divine presence—has clearly been portrayed as a gift of God’s grace. Here, however, it seems to be an earned benefit, merited through obedience. Is this a contradiction?

Apply the Word

Israel failed to *fully* obey and *carefully* follow God’s commands, and the land was taken from them. But through the holiness of Jesus, God’s blessings are available even for an unholy people. He suffered the curse for all of humanity’s disobedience—even death on a tree (cf. Gal. 3:13). Christ is our merit—and the reason we can hope for home!

Pray with Us

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, will be grateful for your prayers today. Please pray that God will continue to use our media ministries in a powerful way to encourage Christians and reach out to those who don’t yet know Christ.

Covenant Renewal: Worship at Home

In the United States, we have recently elected new members to our state and national legislatures. The voting record of incumbents is often a campaign issue: voters try to predict how candidates will vote on issues in the future based on how they have voted in the past. Will they favor tax increases? Will they support school initiatives? What is their moral position on marriage and life issues?

God presents His own “voting record” early in today’s passage. He calls to mind the history of His steadfast love and faithfulness, beginning with Abraham, continuing in Egypt, and persevering through the years of wilderness wandering. Divine initiative and action have been driving the Israelites toward finding a permanent home. The Israelites deserve no credit for the good they are set to inherit: they have not tilled the land, planted the vineyards, or built the cities.

This is a historic moment in the life of ancient Israel. After centuries of waiting, the Promised Land is within reach, and

settlement is finally at hand. Even the bones of Joseph are exhumed from Egypt and re-interred in Canaan, along with the body of Eleazar.

We might expect a celebratory speech from the aged leader, Joshua. But he orders no ticker-tape parade. Rather, he makes an ominous prediction about Israel’s future spiritual failure. “You are not able to serve the LORD,” Joshua declares (v. 19). *All these promises you’re making today about obeying God and serving Him? You will fail every one. And because God is holy and jealous, He will punish those failures and*

I will put my law
in their minds and
write it on their
hearts. I will be
their God, and they
will be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

show righteous wrath against your sins. As monument to the pessimism, Joshua set up a memorial stone as “a witness against us” (v. 27).

God’s people did not obtain their home on their own, and without an intervening act of divine grace, they won’t keep their home, either.

Apply the Word

Today’s reading takes us right to the heart of the gospel message. None of us can serve the Lord apart from the transforming grace of God. Read Jeremiah 31:31–34 to be reminded that the new covenant is a law written on human hearts. By God’s kindness, He does what the Israelites and we could never do: He turns our hearts toward Him (cf. Josh. 24:23).

Pray with Us

Moody Radio programs speak into the hearts of thousands of listeners across the globe, cultures, and generations. Please encourage in prayer Daniel Anderson, Maureen Ber, Daniel Craig, and Jon Gauger from the Programming department.

Covenant Betrayal: Idolatry at Home

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher in the nineteenth century, is infamous for his bold and defiant declaration, “God is dead.” Nietzsche understood that God’s death was necessary for the philosophical project of self-sovereignty. “He who cannot obey himself will be commanded,” he wrote. In other words, humans have only two choices: they can either obey God, or they can kill God and obey themselves.

Of course God cannot die. Yet the book of Judges, which chronicles Israel’s descent into moral chaos, depicts what happens when people forsake God’s authority and choose to obey themselves—when, as the key verse describes, they do as they see fit. In forsaking God, Israel forfeited His good gifts of safety and stability and rest from enemies.

Unfortunately, Joshua’s ominous predictions regarding Israel’s spiritual failures came true within two generations. Joshua died and was buried in Canaan. The elders, who have also witnessed the miracles during

the years of wandering, also died. Unfortunately, with them was buried the testimony of God’s faithfulness and Israel’s covenant promises. Without witness to that important history, memory—and faith—fails.

What may seem like only slight indiscretion on the part of Israel—they only partially

removed the Canaanites from the land, subjecting those who remained to slave labor—turned out to be a critical act of disobedience. God’s intention for the purity of their home is revealed when they do not heed His words. The inhabitants who remain in the land ensnare Israel with their idol worship, and

Israel forsakes fealty to God alone.

Thus begins a cycle of horror that spirals downward in the book of Judges: Israel forsakes God, is punished by God and driven into war, and cries out for deliverance. God sends a judge, and Israel obeys for a short time. Then the cycle begins anew.

In those days [of the Judges] Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

Judges 21:25

Apply the Word

Home reminds us that God is a generous God who wants to give good gifts to His people. Yet we sometimes forfeit those gifts by our disobedience. We forfeit peace when we choose worry. We forfeit provision when we choose self-reliance. Ask God for help to see the ways you “do as you see fit,” rather than obeying and trusting His good commands.

Pray with Us

Today we continue to pray for the staff of Moody Radio’s programming—Nathan McMillan, Anita Lustrea, Lori Neff, Dennis Nugent, and Yahir Vergara. We praise God for their faithful service, for His glory.

Question and Answer

By Mike Kellogg, Moody Radio Host



Are both Jesus and the Bible the Word? If so, does that mean they are the same?



The Bible is the written Word and Jesus is the Incarnate Word. God speaks to us through His Word, which is why the Gospel of John refers to Jesus as the Word: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). It’s important to note that the “Word” (*Logos*) in John 1:1 is also referring to Jesus, not to the Bible.

Jesus is God, and the Scriptures reveal Him to us. When Jesus spoke at creation, He brought the world to life. The Scriptures are God’s words delivered in human speech. Jesus and the Bible are connected because they are all about Him—God’s Word that allows us to know the Word, Jesus, and be in a relationship with God.



Malachi 3:10 says, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.” Does this mean everybody is supposed to tithe?



This verse was written to an agricultural economy based on the work people did in their fields. But Christians today don’t just grow crops to survive. So we, for the most part, have never brought to the church our cabbages and corn and grain as our tithe. (Maybe as a church fellowship supper!) These words were meant for Jews who brought their produce as offerings for the priests in Israel.

In the early days of the church there was no enforced tithe, but we see in Acts 2 that actually people were contributing all that they had, including profits from the sale of property, to the church. Since then, many Christians have found that offering God 10 percent of their income provides a helpful guideline to keep them accountable to give back to the Lord. But the primary New Testament principle of giving is found in 2 Corinthians 9. We are to give cheerfully and faithfully.

Some Christians are so cash-strapped by debt they think it is impossible to give to the Lord. When our overhead gets out of hand because of our confusion of wants and needs, we discover that giving to God helps bring discipline to our lives and puts our wants in true perspective.



Does the Bible actually forbid having sex before marriage?



Yes. The Bible says that virginity before marriage is a true virtue. Compare that to the lifestyles of

Continued on next page

Giving to God helps bring discipline to our lives and puts our wants in true perspective.

Continued from previous page

the “rich and famous” and even all the people like us, a little closer to home. Today sex has been trivialized for both young men and women, and what should have been presented to our chosen one as a special gift has been shared with so many others that it has lost its sacred meaning. Men and women should both keep themselves pure for their marriage. Purity is not just for women. The New Testament repeatedly stresses that sexual immorality is not consistent with a life that honors God (see Acts 15; 1 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3).

on God’s people. Revelation 21:9 says that he will be cast out of heaven, and then ultimately tossed into the Lake of Fire.



Some have said that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was the lack of hospitality. Is that true?



Genesis 19:8 says, “Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you

can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.” The men of Sodom knew these two men had come to visit Lot. Lot invited them to his home and fed them, and offered them a place to stay for the night. But the men of Sodom came to Lot’s door and asked that Lot bring these men to them. The NIV is direct in capturing their intent: “so that we can have sex with them” (v. 5). Not to his credit, Lot offered them his virgin daughters, but they refused, saying they wanted those two men instead. The men (who were angels in the form of men) pulled Lot in and slammed the door.

The angels offered their own judgment on the desire of the men of Sodom and blinded them at the door so they couldn’t find it to open it. The angels warned Lot to get his family out of town to escape God’s judgment on this wicked city. The judgment seems to be clearly connected with the attempts to force these men into sexual relations, not simply for rude behavior toward guests.



What does the name *Jesus Christ* mean?



The name *Jesus* means salvation. In Hebrew, *Yeshua*, and in Greek, *Iesus*, could also be translated *Joshua*. *Christ* is a title, not the last name of Jesus. It is Greek word for the Hebrew title, *Messiah*. His name *Jesus* indicates that He is our Savior, and the title *Christ* means that He is our Messiah, the Chosen One of God.



Does Satan actually have access to heaven?



The Bible says so. You can’t read the book of Job without acknowledging that God allows Satan not only to come before His throne but to actually have discourse with Him. Satan is called the accuser of our brothers in Revelation 12:10. He appears before God and makes aspersions

Famine: Tragedy at Home (and Away)

Elie Wiesel's novel *Night* depicts the gruesome horror of a young Jewish boy, imprisoned in a German concentration camp, who watched his parents and sister marched to the gas chamber. "Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my Faith forever. ... Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust."

Stories of such terrible suffering convey the depths of agony. Not surprisingly, the Bible, as the true accounting of human history, also recounts tales of horror and tragedy—in the stories of men like Job and women like Naomi.

As we read today, Naomi was a woman embittered by the story God had written for her life. At the end of Ruth 1, she narrates some of those details to the women congregating at the city gates upon her return to Bethlehem with her Moabite daughter-in-law. But like many who suffer tragedy, her tears prevent her from see-

ing the events objectively. "I went away full" (v. 21), she begins, forgetting that she and her husband, Elimelek, had left Bethlehem many years earlier because of famine.

The text doesn't indicate how they felt about this voluntary exile to Moab.

Were they simply being pragmatic and parental, leaving for a land where there was grain to be gleaned to keep them and their boys alive? Did they agonize over the decision to leave their home and native country, which God had promised to His people?

Did they have too little connection to the covenantal promises made to Abraham to be saddened and conflicted?

One thing that the story of Ruth (and the greater search for home) reveals: we can feel far away from God's promises. We can suffer loss and wonder why God doesn't intervene. But that isn't the final chapter. There is hope.

Why, LORD, do you
reject me and hide
your face from me?

Psalms 88:14

Apply the Word

Naomi's suffering reminds us that God never asks us to pretend away our pain. In fact, the prayer book of the Psalms records plaintive, honest cries to God. *Where are you? Why don't you care?* When we suffer, these acts of honesty aren't betrayals of belief but rather exercises of faith. Often, it is prayers of bitterness that ask for God's relief that clear the way for renewed trust.

Pray with Us

The Lord has given Dr. Timothy Arens, vice president and dean of Student Life, a long and fruitful ministry here at Moody. Please keep him in your prayers, as he interacts with dozens of students and staff every day.

Exile: Fleeing Home

When African colonies began to gain independence from the European colonial powers in the 1960s and 70s, the transition back to self-governance was difficult. For example, though Belgium granted its former colony of Rwanda independence in 1962, Rwanda's first president was deposed just eleven years later in a military coup. The army surrounded his home, and he and his wife died a slow, agonizing death by starvation.

Today, we read of two violent regime changes in ancient Israel. First, the Assyrians besieged Samaria, capital of Israel's Northern Kingdom. When the city finally fell in 722 B.C., the Assyrians initiated a mass deportation of Jews and a resettlement of the land. The text describes not just the loss of the land but also the loss of God's presence. They are forcibly exiled—geographically and spiritually.

The worst seems to have happened: God's people, as consequence for their sin, have been driven from home, and the

land welcomes other ethnic groups, who worship other gods. Sure, these transplanted people are happy to add Yahweh to their religious panoply, but they don't pledge Him their undivided allegiance.

Just a little more than a century later, the Southern Kingdom, Judah, also falls to

an imperial power—Babylon this time. Everything in Jerusalem is burned: the royal palace, the temple, and the houses. The author takes pain to describe the destruction of Solomon's Temple, which had been not only the center for religious festival and sacrifice

but also the place of God's presence. The priests are executed, and the gold, silver, and bronze objects used in the temple service are pillaged.

Jerusalem is a ghost of its former self: with only the poor left to till the land, the streets echo with silence. Home has been destroyed. God's people are exiled without hope for return.

Do not cast me
from your presence
or take your Holy
Spirit from me.

Psalm 51:11

Apply the Word

For centuries, despite God's forbearance and prophetic intervention, His people chose stubbornness rather than surrender, rebellion rather than obedience. Because they refused to listen to God, they were cast far from the promise of home. Sin never reaps the benefits we think it will. Our greatest good—our happiness (and home)—is found in God and keeping His commands.

Pray with Us

Thank you for including in your prayers our Academic Records department: Auctavia Cegers, Margaret Creech, Melanie Monteclaro, George Mosher, Bethanne Tremper, and Tyrome Turner. Praise God for their important service to our students.

Lament: The Grief of Home

In the Victorian era, a widower or widow was required to wear mourning clothes for a year after the death of their spouse. Similarly, a child mourning a parent or a sibling wore black silk or bombazine for a year to signal their grief. Today, however, we no longer observe these kinds of strict mourning traditions. In fact, we are rather apprehensive about public mention of death.

Many would say that modern Christians have lost the capacity for lament, which is the mode of poetry from today's reading. Lamentations is a collection of grief poems, four of which are acrostic. The author of these poems, often thought to be Jeremiah, measures his sorrow over Jerusalem's destruction in image and meter. He has watched the city go up in flames. He has seen the glory of Solomon's temple extinguished.

After the Babylonians trampled through the streets of Jerusalem, the city has been

left a widow, bereaved of her husband. She is like a queen, fallen from power and condemned to servitude. Warfare has violated her, and "they have all seen her naked" (v. 8).

In all of this misery, there is none to comfort, none to rescue. The countries upon which she had relied for help and support have failed her. Her friends have become foes. Indeed, it is the hand of the Lord who has brought down the sentence of judgment upon her for the history of her sin.

It would seem impossible to have hope in the grim aftermath of Babylonian siege, invasion, and deportation; but the prophet holds a candle of promise in today's key verse. Though home is in ashes, he can yet believe that God will resurrect a future for His people. This judgment is not God's final word. "We are not consumed."

This I call to mind
and therefore
I have hope:
Because of the
LORD's great love we
are not consumed.

Lamentations 3:21–22

Apply the Word

The Bible teaches us that lament and hope can coexist. When we are saddened by loss, it is possible to say, "Look, LORD, and consider, for I am despised" (v. 11)—and yet affirm that God's steadfast love and compassion will not fail. In our communities of faith, we need to make room for people to grieve their losses, even if sadness feels contrary to hope and faith.

Pray with Us

As we prepare students for a lifetime of Christian ministry, Janessa Davis, Jacqueline Haywood, Christopher Toland, Ricardo Brown, and David Humphrey in the Admissions department provide direction and support. Would you pray for them today?

The House of God: The Whisper of Home

Donna Tartt's Pulitzer-prize winning novel, *The Goldfinch*, recounts an explosion of a terrorist bomb, the death of the narrator's mother, and a depressive series of events. The shadow of crisis hulks around every narrative corner. Yet the novel ends with a faint whisper of hope: "It is a glory and a privilege to love what Death doesn't touch."

In our study this month, death and exile have lurked ominously in Israel's story. If God originally meant to "implace" His people, giving them the peace and rest of his presence, the Old Testament curtains close on God's people carried far from the land of divine promise. Home has been pillaged and plundered.

The Old Testament, however, isn't only depressive episodes. Glimmers of hope sparkle throughout. Today, we rewind history to look at the construction of the tabernacle, built when the Israelites were delivered from Egypt. Just like God originally made a home for His people, the

people of God worked to make a home for Him. The tabernacle was the dwelling place for God on earth.

As John Sailhamer notes in his book *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, there are striking similarities between the acts of creation (as recorded in Genesis 1) and the acts

of tabernacle construction (as recorded in the latter half of the book of Exodus). The introductory phrase, "And God said," (or "And the LORD said,") occurs seven times in both narratives. Both the glory of Eden and the glory of the tabernacle are described in terms of precious metals and jewels.

After creation was completed, God inspected His work. After the tabernacle was completed, Moses inspected the work.

If the Garden of Eden was a place in which men and women were meant to walk with God, the tabernacle recovered, at least partially, the sense that God was near.

Moses inspected
the work and saw
that they had done
it just as the LORD
had commanded.
So Moses
blessed them.

Exodus 39:43

Apply the Word

Why would God ask human beings to build a home for Him? The tabernacle (and later, Solomon's temple) could never contain all the glory and majesty of God's presence. But they point forward to a greater Tabernacle and greater Temple—Jesus, in whom the presence of God dwelt fully (see Colossians 1). Praise God that He desires to make a home with His people!

Pray with Us

Jim Elliott, vice president of Stewardship, contributes to faithful stewardship and connection with our donors in everything we do. Please support Jim and his teams in prayer as they reach out to Moody's faithful supporters.

The Mountain of God: The Healing of Home

Religious cults have often attempted to predict the date of the end of the world. These prophetic claims aren't a recent phenomenon. The Essenes, one strict, ascetic sect of Jews, predicted the world would end with their revolt against Rome in A.D. 66 to 70. No one, of course, can predict end-times events with any accuracy. Jesus Himself said He didn't know the date the Father had set for the world's end (see Matt. 24:36).

While we have fewer specifics than we would like about the future that awaits us as God's people, the writings of the Prophets allows us to see a glorious vision of our future home.

Often, the Prophets described the future by returning to images familiar in Israel's history: the Garden of Eden and the temple, as two primary examples.

In the first part of the book of Isaiah, the prophet is writing for Judah in the years leading up to Babylonian exile. In this passage, while the temple hasn't yet been

destroyed, Isaiah envisions a temple greater than Solomon's temple (and greater than the second temple, which the exiles rebuilt after their return from exile). This future temple is different than the first and second temples because it is not a center exclusively dedicated to Jewish worship. Rather, "all nations will stream to it" (v. 2).

Praise be to the
LORD, who has given
rest to his people
Israel just as
he promised.

1 Kings 8:56

Furthermore, this temple will require no priestly caste to offer sacrifices and mediate between God and humanity. The teaching of God's Law will be done by God Himself. Finally, this temple represents the rest that God has been promising to give to His people.

Warfare will end; the weapons of war will become farming implements.

When Solomon dedicated his temple, proclaiming that God had given rest to his people, he knew only the partial fulfillment of that promise. Isaiah foresaw its final completion.

Apply the Word

Rest is central to the divine promise of home. Jesus promised His followers a yoke of "rest" (see Matt. 11:28, 29). What could it look like for you to rest from trying to win God's approval? To rest from having to secure the good opinions of others? To rest from mindless busyness? To rest from fear and worry? God is inviting you into His rest today.

Pray with Us

It's our privilege to pray for Stewardship's regional representatives who minister to our donors across the country. May God protect them in their travels and the Holy Spirit provide the strength, encouragement, and wisdom for their daily walk.

The Holiness of God: The Vindication of Home

Years ago, when consumers wrote more personal checks for financial transactions, financial institutions hired people to pore over stacks of checks, comparing them to signatures on file. Now that most consumers use credit cards, signature verification happens more rarely. Transactions are only investigated when a customer has a complaint.

A signature on a check verifies the identity of the payer. It also serves as a promise. In our passage today, God reveals how very seriously He takes His promises.

Writing during the period of the Babylonian exile, Ezekiel didn't have much tangible proof that God was keeping His promises. The people of Israel had been exiled from the land promised to Abraham, and the nations reveled in their destruction. By all accounts, their dreams of "home" seem hopelessly lost.

But the Lord promises to end the scorn of Israel's neighbors and the shame of His

people—although He isn't simply being nice and feeling sympathetic that His people are suffering, nor is He like a parent who relents when He realizes His punishment has been too harsh. No, the people of Israel deserved their punishment, and if God chooses to be merciful and kind, His real motivation is concern for His own name.

The LORD your
God is God;
he is the faithful
God, keeping his
covenant of love
to a thousand
generations.

Deuteronomy 7:9

Much earlier in Exodus, when God's people bowed down to the golden calf in the wilderness, He threatened to wipe them out. But Moses interceded, asking God to consider His own reputation (cf. Ex. 32:11–14). *What would the nations say? That you were too weak to bring your people into the land?*

God did relent when Moses pleaded with Him, and He took the nation of Israel into the Promised Land despite their idolatry. And He would relent again. For the sake of His own name, He will keep the promises He made to Abraham hundreds of years earlier.

Apply the Word

Today's passage is God-centered in action and intent. God will cleanse His people and bring them home despite their spiritual mistakes and mistrust: that is His promise. This can comfort us when we feel that we are constantly failing to obey God. We can pray, *help us*—save us from all our uncleanness (v. 29)—remembering that as He forgives and helps us, He honors His own name!

Pray with Us

Would you include Dr. James Spencer, VP and dean of Moody's Distance Learning, in your prayers today? Ask for God's guidance in developing new programs and degrees and reaching out to new students across the globe.

The New Tabernacle: The Dawn of Home

“Of all visible things the greatest is the world,” Augustine wrote in *City of God*. “Of all invisible things the greatest is God. But the existence of the world is a matter of observation: the existence of God is a matter of belief.” Though Augustine lived long before the Age of Empiricism and scientific inquiry, he understood that faith was the only human faculty that could grasp the theological truth that God exists.

Science can describe the created world. It can even make predictions based on the observable laws of nature. But it cannot explain the pre-history John takes up in the opening of his Gospel, when he deliberately recycles some of the language from Genesis 1. (The most notable similarity is the memorable opening, “In the beginning.”)

In the beginning, before the Trinitarian God ever made a home for His people, He enjoyed a home with Himself. John references the plurality of God’s being

when affirming that the Word was simultaneously God and *with* God. Though He is one God, He also exists as three interdependent persons.

As Alister McGrath explains, the Trinity is a “community of being,” in which each person, while maintaining its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them.” In other words, home has existed long before the Garden of Eden. By virtue of His love, God was enjoying His own presence before He created humanity.

Anyone who loves
me will obey my
teaching. My Father
will love them, and
we will come to
them and make our
home with them.

John 14:23

In fact, relationship is so much a part of God’s character that God has gone to extreme lengths to repair the broken fellowship with humanity—and rebuild their home. He clothed the second person of the Trinity with flesh and sent Him to be born into a world needing rescue. As the original Greek text more vividly states, the Word “tabernacled among us” (v. 14).

Apply the Word

By using the word *tabernacle*, John wants his readers to remember the divine promise that accompanied the instructions to build the portable sanctuary of worship: “I will dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8). In Jesus, He fulfills this promise, making atonement through His Son so that an unholy people can approach Him. Jesus is God’s dwelling coming to earth. He is our home!

Pray with Us

For the next three days, please join us in prayer for the teams in Distance Learning. Today we uphold in prayer and thank God for the faithful service of Daniel Spurrier, Berk Arslan, Lanna-Marie Enns, Christian Martinsen, and Myrna Favors.

The Temple of God: The Permanence of Home

Bagel shops in New York City prepare for Passover, the eight-day festival commemorating the Exodus, by rolling considerably less dough. Because the Old Testament Scripture calls for every household to remove yeast from their homes, during the festival bagel-shop owners increase production of unleavened bread. They also meticulously scrub their display cases for traces of bread. This ritual cleaning is critical for their customers who are observant Jews and want to keep the Passover holy.

In our passage today, Jesus participates in His own ritual cleansing in preparation for the Passover. He isn't removing traces of leaven from the local bakery, however. He is throwing out the merchants, who had transformed the temple courts into a market for bartering and buying. They were selling animals for the wearied travelers who had come to Jerusalem for the holy festival and hadn't brought the animals necessary for the required sacrifices.

They were also exchanging money into the local currency so that foreigners could pay the required temple tax. Although their services might have been useful and necessary, they had wrongly chosen the place of exchange. And as Luke mentions in his Gospel, these merchants were also racketeers, charging exorbitant fees and committing extortion from the poor (cf. Luke 19:46).

We have a building
from God, an
eternal house in
heaven, not built by
human hands.

2 Corinthians 5:1

John includes this event in his Gospel as part of his emphasis on the theme of Jesus as the new Tabernacle and Temple. The temple built by Solomon was eventually destroyed by Babylonians; the temple built by those who returned

from exile (and enlarged by Herod) was also soon to be destroyed in A.D. 70.

But there is a greater, more permanent Temple—the body of Jesus. It would seem to be destroyed when crucified and pierced, but it would be raised up from ruins on the third day.

Apply the Word

Our longing for home is a longing for permanence, and the gospel declares that we have a permanent home in Christ. He has a body that God has raised from death: it will never be destroyed. And when we trust Christ, our bodies gain his body's imperishability. We will die, but we will also be raised to new life in bodies that will never perish.

Pray with Us

As we continue to focus our prayers on Moody's Distance Learning, please add Alin Vrancila, Maria-Elena Franco, Kerwin Rodriguez, John Engelkemier, and Danielle Kelly to your prayer list. Pray for God's blessing on their interactions with students.

Gone Before: The Preparation of Home

In his book *Jesus, Continued*, J. D. Greear argues that the church needs a renewed emphasis on the oft-neglected third person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit. God’s people should take seriously the claim Jesus Himself made when He told His disciples that it would be *better* for them when He went away because they would then receive the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7).

It must have been nearly impossible for the disciples to imagine how it would be to their advantage to have their spiritual shepherd and teacher taken from them! Indeed, Jesus had to console them when suggesting this reality to come.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled,” Jesus says (v. 1). His promise to send the Holy Spirit to live in them meant He would be even more present with them then.

Each member of the Trinity has a role and responsibility in enacting God’s plan for human salvation. As we have seen so far,

when Jesus comes as God in the flesh, He renews and fulfills the promise that God’s dwelling will be with men and women. He offers a permanent sacrifice for sin and becomes the permanent temple of God, which nothing and no one can destroy.

When Jesus was taken back up into heaven, where He waits for the end of the world as we know it, He sent His Holy Spirit to indwell every believer. Because He resides in us, we each become new and living temples. We are the unholy made holy by the blood of the Lamb—we become God’s home!

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

1 Corinthians 6:19

This is, of course, the meaning beyond Jesus’ mysterious words: because of the Father’s love and the Son’s sacrifice, God makes His home with us. “Peace I leave with you,” Jesus says (v. 27). Or as we might put it into other words, *Enjoy the rest I have wanted to give to you.*

Apply the Word

It is easy to feel far from God. Maybe we’ve persisted in patterns of unrepentant sin. Maybe we’ve been lazy and neglected healthy spiritual practices. Maybe, through no fault of our own, the lights have gone out, and we’ve tumbled into a dark and lonely wilderness. But God isn’t far. The theology of home (and the Holy Spirit) assures us that He couldn’t be closer.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayer time for Distance Learning, please ask God to encourage Richard Lin, Feven Gebrehiwot, Kevin Mahaffy, and Andrew Beaty, as they develop online and modular programs and ensure quality of instruction.

High Priestly Prayer: The Intercession of Home

When Wheaton College alumnus Todd Beamer died a hero on September 11, 2001, his alma mater renamed some of their existing buildings the Todd M. Beamer Center. When Wheaton College alumnus Dennis Hastert was indicted by the federal government, his alma mater removed his name from the Center for Economics, Government and Public Policy.

A name on a building, besides suggesting a significant financial donation, is meant to call to mind a legacy. God promised He would put His own name to a building: the temple that Solomon built. As we've discussed in recent days, when Jesus came to earth, He claimed that He was the final Temple of God.

In today's passage, Jesus attests that He is the building on which is imprinted the divine name. In verse 6, the NIV translates the text as "I have revealed you," but the

original Greek text is closer to "I have revealed your name." Again in verse 26, the Greek is closer to, "I have made known your name." This makes clearer the truth that in Christ, the promise of place and presence—which God spoke so long ago—is fulfilled.

You are to seek the
place the LORD your
God will choose
from among all
your tribes to put
his Name there for
his dwelling.

Deuteronomy 12:5

This brings comfort to us as believers who live in a world that often doesn't feel like home. We don't fully belong to this world. We belong to Christ, and because of this, we will always experience a nagging sense of alienation.

Despite our status as outsiders here in this world, we aren't called to despise the world, nor are we called to withdraw from it. It is still the world that God created and loves (John 3:16). But we need the protection of the Holy Spirit in order to fully experience the unity and joy that is intended for God's people.

Apply the Word

We're not at home. This is a good reminder, helping us manage our ongoing disappointments with this world. Our family, no matter how wonderful, will fall short of our heavenly family. Our church, no matter how loving, isn't yet Christ's perfect bride. Have you been clutching to some impossible ideal for this world? Can you open your hands to embrace a greater, future hope of home?

Pray with Us

Steven Mogck, executive vice president and chief operating officer, appreciates your prayers for his teams who work hard to keep the various departments on our Chicago campus operating smoothly. Let's thank God together for these employees.

Pentecost: A New Family

Rachel Dolezal made international headlines when, although she claimed to be black and was head of her local NAACP chapter, it was revealed that she had been born to Caucasian parents. At the time the story broke, Dolezal denied her parentage. “There’s been no biological proof that Larry and Ruthanne are my biological parents,” she told the media.

Few children go as far as Dolezal to distance themselves from their biological family. Yet in the New Testament, it is clear that through Jesus, God is forming a new family, which has greater claim on His children than their biological families. Through spiritual adoption, we are made firstborn sons—heirs—in God’s family (cf. Rom. 8:15). We have a new home.

In today’s passage, God’s new family, conceived long ago and envisioned by the Prophets, is born through the coming

and indwelling of the Holy Spirit on the occasion of Pentecost, the second of the Jewish pilgrim festivals. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims had come to Jerusalem from a host of faraway places, speaking a variety of different languages. But on this day, God has one message, which each person heard in his native tongue: Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. Repent and be baptized in His name.

Yet to all who did
receive him, to
those who believed
in his name, he
gave the right to
become children
of God.

John 1:12

Later Jewish traditions associate Pentecost with the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Before leading His people from Egypt into the Promised Land, God proclaimed not only His law but also His intent

to make the Hebrew people His treasured possession (cf. Ex. 19:5–6). Similarly, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Peter proclaims the gospel, which completes God’s intent to bring both Jews and Gentiles into His new family. Believers have a new family—and a new home.

Apply the Word

The new converts at Pentecost quickly realized their new familial obligations. They sold their possessions, sacrificing for one another’s needs. They opened their homes, congregating daily to learn from the Apostles. How readily do you identify your loyalty not to your biological family but to your spiritual one? What is one way you can sacrifice to serve your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Pray with Us

We are grateful for the faithful leaders of the Moody family, our board of trustees. As they dedicate their time, skills, and efforts to the Moody ministries, please ask for God’s help and guidance in everything they do.

Household of God: A New Home

The nuclear family as we know it today is a more recent historical phenomenon. In the late Middle Ages, for example, it was not uncommon for European households to include more than twenty people. Parents and children, apprentices, employees, and household servants often lived together under one roof. Not until the seventeenth century in the Netherlands did the relationship between parents and children become more important (and the home more private) in the Western world.

Reading today from Paul's letter to his young ministry apprentice, Timothy, we notice that he mentions the word *household* or *family* twice. First, in verse 4, he uses the Greek word from which we derive the English word *economy*. As Paul lists the qualifications for choosing leaders in the church, he includes the able management of their domestic households. This includes financial, relational and spiritual duties. An elder/pastor must not be greedy. He

must be faithful to his wife. He must teach his children obedience and respect. If a leader discharges these "private" duties with integrity, having gained for himself good standing in his own community, this will be a credit to the gospel and attest to his capacity for "public" leadership in the church.

Treat younger men
as brothers, older
women as mothers,
and younger
women as sisters.

1 Timothy 5:1–2

Just like the potential elder has a household to manage, God also has a household: it is His church. One divine intention behind establishing a leadership hierarchy in the church (of elders and deacons, vv. 1–13) is for managing that household. And God establishes a

rule for those in His household to follow: the gospel, summarized here in what may have been a fragment of an early faith creed (v. 16).

We have various metaphors for understanding the church: it is Christ's bride (cf. Rev. 21:2), it is Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:27), and it is also God's household.

Apply the Word

Understanding the church as our new family and new home reframes our relationships with God's people. As Paul notes in 1 Timothy 5:1, older men should be treated as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters. What respect for others does this idea of belonging to God's household inspire? To what standard of purity does it call you?

Pray with Us

Today please pray for our undergraduate faculty from the Theology department—John Clark, David Finkbeiner, Marcus Johnson, Bryan Liffin, and Michael McDuffee. May the Lord use powerfully their insight into the Bible in their ministry to the students.

Song of Return: The Melody of Home

Although the United States generally observes fewer formal ceremonies compared to many older European countries, at American high school graduations, certain traditions are regularly observed. Graduates process and recess to the tune of “Pomp and Circumstance.” They wear long gowns and mortarboard caps, typically turning the tassel from one side of their cap to the other at the end of the ceremony.

Ceremonies are important for commemorating momentous events like births, weddings, graduations, and even deaths. In our passage today, we have a very important “homecoming” ceremony, given by God to His people for celebrating the fulfillment of His covenant promises. When the Israelites “have entered” the land, when they have “taken possession” of the inheritance, and when they “have settled” into their new home, they are to bring a basket of produce to Shiloh, the central place of worship, and

return to God a portion of the good that they have received from Him (vv. 1–2).

But God’s people are not commanded to make a wordless offering. Rather, they are given a brief history to recite as they set their basket in front of the altar. It is their story of a search for home: “My father

He chose to give us
birth through the
word of truth, that
we might be a kind
of firstfruits of
all he created.

James 1:18

was a wandering Aramean.” They would start with Abraham and continuing through Egyptian exile (v. 5). They are instructed to recall that though they had once been a placeless people, God made good on His promises. Because of His favor, they had made it home.

One might wonder if the history we will recite, as we enter the new Jerusalem, will be similar. “My father was a wandering Aramean,” we might begin, remembering our life as one long and weary journey. But there will be one key difference in that heavenly ceremony: the firstfruits that God’s people will offer will be themselves.

Apply the Word

The firstfruits ceremony, which the Israelites were instructed to observe upon entering the Promised Land, reminds us of the importance of retelling God’s acts of goodness in our lives and the history of His faithfulness. Write down your faith story, and share with a friend this week how God has shown His steadfast love to you—despite your losses and trials and temptations.

Pray with Us

Please add these Theology professors to your prayer list today: Sanjay Merchant, Bryan O’Neal, Gregg Quiggle, David Rim, Richard Weber, and Kevin Zuber. Pray for the refreshing power of God’s Word to fill their lives and ministry.

The City of God: Our Future Home

Since Harry Winston gave the 45.52-carat gem to the Smithsonian Institution in 1958, more than 100 million people have visited to see the rare Hope Diamond. The diamond most likely came from a 112-3/16 carat diamond sold to King Louis XIV in France in 1668 and was later recut and reset in 1673. In 1792, during the French Revolution, the crown jewels were looted and the French blue diamond disappeared until it surfaced in London in 1812—exactly twenty years later, when the statute of limitations for the theft expired in France.

As we draw to a close our study on home this month, we read about the apostle John's vision of heaven, which includes the splendor of fine gems and precious gold. If the Hope Diamond is a rare and precious stone, its beauty pales in comparison to the bejeweled foundations, pearly gates, and gilded streets of the new Jerusalem. These may be descriptions of a splendor beyond John's comprehension, but they

seek to express the incomparable glory of the holy city.

John pays as much attention to what is absent from our future home as to what is present. Absent is the brokenness of the former world order, which had been haunted by death and suffering, pain and

tears. Absent is the daily cycle of sunrise and sunset and the yearly cycle of the solstices. There is no more sun—because the glory of God illuminates a perpetual, eternal day. Absent is the temple where the people of God have congregated to experience God's presence and offer sacrifice and worship. God

is the temple. The Lamb is our final home.

"When we come to [Revelation 21 and 22]," writes one theologian, "we find not ransomed souls making their way to a disembodied heaven but rather the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth, uniting the two in a lasting embrace."

But you have come
to Mount Zion,
to the city of the
living God, to the
heavenly Jerusalem.

Hebrews 12:22

Apply the Word

The Lord Jesus taught His people to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). A study of home isn't just about future salvation. It's also about God's mission in the world today. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us—how can live in a way that reflects our true home?

Pray with Us

Biblical principles of good stewardship determine Moody's financial policy. Please uphold in prayer Ken Heullitt, chief financial officer, and his responsibilities in this strategic leadership position.

New Sabbath: The Rest of Home

In the 1950s and 1960s, Americans and Russians were competing to get to the moon. In 1961, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin entered space in a small capsule and reported, “I don’t see any God up here.” Seven years later, when Americans completed their first manned mission to the moon, the world listened to three Apollo 8 astronauts take turns reading from Genesis 1: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Faith will finally decide what we choose to see and believe about God and the created order. Either the material world is all there is, as Yuri Gagarin saw it from space—or there is another home and an invisible, eternal homemaker.

The writer of Hebrews points out that we are like Israel at the edge of the Promised Land. Believing on God’s promises can seem like a tremendous risk. Israel had to give up the familiarity of Egypt for the

unfamiliarity of Canaan, and sadly, they chose predictable slavery over what they perceived as unpredictable rest.

Nevertheless, faith isn’t the internal mustering of belief. Faith isn’t just trying hard to mentally grasp God’s promises. Israel wouldn’t have been exercising faith had they stood on the far side of the River Jordan without ever attempting to cross its borders. Rather, faith demanded action: Israel needed to enter the Promised Land and battle the inhabitants of the land, trusting God’s promises of deliverance.

It takes faith to believe the story of home, as the Bible tells it: that in the beginning, God put His people in a beautiful garden and gave them rest; that rebellion was the reason for humanity’s exile; that we await a future city and a final home, purchased for us by the blood of the Lamb. This faith will allow us to act in obedience and belief.

The promised Holy Spirit ... is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession.

Ephesians 1:13–14

Apply the Word

How can you live in light of God’s promises of a future home? Maybe it’s zeal for evangelism: you tell others about the eternal home God is making in and through Jesus. Maybe it’s simplicity and generosity: you lay up treasure for your future home. Maybe it’s perseverance: you maintain hope in the midst of earthly struggles. Take heart: one day, you’re going home!

Pray with Us

Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, has offered his wisdom and leadership in guiding the academic programs to train Christians for global ministry. We rejoice before God for the influence he has had on so many students.

New Inheritance: The Forever of Home

In December 2006, Katie Davis traveled from her Tennessee hometown to Uganda. She returned the following summer and stayed for good. Since that time, she has started initiatives to feed many of the impoverished children as well as send them to school. Katie has also adopted thirteen daughters. "I am not doing anything spectacular," she says. "I am just doing what God called me to do as a follower of Him. Feed His sheep, do unto the least of his people."

Katie is making a home for Ugandan children by feeding them, sending them to school, and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. As she admits, she isn't a spiritual superhero. Instead, she is sharing the welcome, safety, belonging, and care that she has received from God.

Our study this month has taught us that home is a gift of grace, which God gives to His people. The Garden of Eden was humanity's first home and an expression of God's blessing. He sheltered Adam and

Eve, and in that safety they enjoyed obedient communion with Him there. Home was a place for enjoying God's presence, and when they were cast out because of their rebellion, it caused wrenching grief over the dual loss.

But beginning with the story of Abraham, God has declared His gracious intention to bring His people home. "I will bless you," He declared on oath. And because of His faithfulness, He continued to take generous initiative toward His people, despite the many episodes of failure in Israel's history. God completed His promise to make it possible for us to find home in Jesus.

We have a better covenant through God's Son: His blood, sprinkled as atonement for human sin, saves sinners from the punishment for human wandering. There is no better word than what this blood speaks. *Welcome home.*

I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ... Out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

Exodus 19:4–5

Apply the Word

Reread Psalm 84 today as we conclude this month's study and pay close attention to verses 5 through 7. Here, God's people are pictured as traveling through the valley of the shadow of death ("Bacā" means weeping), yet they go from strength to strength. They know that their future home is beyond the valley: their faith, like springs of water and puddles of rain, refreshes their hope!

Pray with Us

As we come to the end of our prayer time this month, we hope you've been encouraged and uplifted by our study from the Bible. Let's pray together today that this month's devotional will give us better understanding of our eternal destination in Christ.

FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

I gave January's Today in the Word to a new friend I met from China. She emailed me recently and said that she has slept so much better now, having peace, as she's read the devotionals I gave her. Now I'm going to give a gift so she can receive the devotional for a year. The Lord is the one who did it, but I'm so grateful I could be there for her! Thank you!

—Anita (via phone call)

I am very thankful for [Today in the Word]. All of the devotions are very good and very helpful in growing my Christian life.

—Lana (via email)

My wife was battling anxiety and depression in 2012—2013, and Today in the Word was influential in her getting through it. Thank you!

—Jorge (via phone call)

I wanted to tell you how much I have been blessed over the years with your devotional. You have no idea how my faith and my life have changed by disciplining myself to read each passage of the Bible guided by Today in the Word. I have tried many

others but never followed through or did not feel like I was getting the full meaning of a particular book. This month [June 2015] is my favorite: the book of Job.

—Lesbia (via letter)

I wanted to let you know how significant Today in the Word has been in my life. If I miss a day, it's very obvious to my level of peacefulness. I feel so connected to God and how to live. It is an important part of my life.

—Marianne (via phone call)

Your ministry has been my lifeline while being locked in a Texas prison. This September 27 will be my 45th birthday. My life's travels have been rough! A cat having 9 lives don't have a thing over me. . . . Do you have any clue how hard it is to live life for 44 ½ years without knowing God? If I had a dime for each time someone would preach to me, I would be in the Forbes top ten richest people in the world. I just wanted to say thank you for watering the seed someone placed upon me so many days, weeks, months, or even years ago.

—Shannon (via letter)



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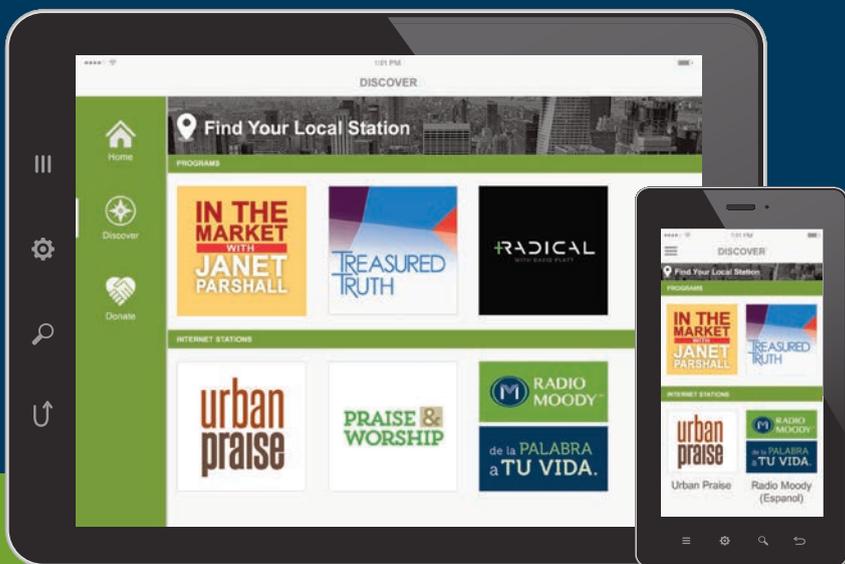


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