

My Heart Cries Out

*Gospel
Meditations
for Everyday Life*



Paul David Tripp

“Poetry is the expression of the heart and mind of a person. When that person reflects on the person and work of Jesus, the expression is hopeful and redemptive. As an artist who uses words to express, I found joy in reading *My Heart Cries Out*. This work connects with the human condition in a unique and awesome way.”

Lecrae, hip-hop recording artist

“For some years now, Paul Tripp has delivered soul-reaching wisdom and timeless encouragement centered around the gospel and grace of Jesus, from which I have greatly benefited. It doesn’t take much reading of Tripp’s work to recognize that under his skin there is an artist lurking. In this collection of meditations, he artfully paints pictures that resonate deep in our souls as he walks with us through the pain and struggles of this world while also helping us see the glory of God’s grace.”

TobyMac, hip-hop recording artist; music producer; songwriter

“As with a timeless hymn lyric, Tripp has the great ability to grasp the vast riches of biblical truth and distill it for us in creative, compelling, and wonderfully practical ways. His writing has regularly shaped how we think as individuals, parents, and songwriters.”

Keith and Kristyn Getty, hymn writers; recording artists

“One of Paul Tripp’s great gifts to us is his ability to communicate profound truths in ways that are not only clear and searching, but also beautiful. With this collection of poems and meditations, he leans in to that gift to give us something that is, on the one hand, completely new, and on the other, familiar in its wisdom, insight, and honesty.”

Russ Ramsey, Pastor, Christ Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee;
author, *Retelling the Story* series

“As I read these meditations, I couldn’t help but wonder if they are the types of prayers the Holy Spirit speaks on our behalf when our groans are too deep for words. *My Heart Cries Out* is a beautiful, honest, and grace-filled collection of reflections from a heart that has been near to the Lord for many years. Your heart will cry out indeed—cry out for joy and thanksgiving as you read the pages of this wonderful book.”

Trillia Newbell, author, *Sacred Endurance; If God Is for Us;*
and *God’s Very Good Idea*

“So often these days, Christianity is presented solely as an intellectual enterprise, a faith that speaks only to the mind. But the Christian faith is so much more. God wants more than your thought life; he wants your emotional life too. He wants and demands all of your life. That is why Paul Tripp’s *My Heart Cries Out* is such a needed project for today. Not only are the words in this book beautiful, they are beautifully honest. In *My Heart Cries Out*, Tripp will help you think, feel, and live out your love for God.”

Thomas J. Terry, Executive Director, Humble Beast; member,
Beautiful Eulogy; Lead Pastor, Trinity Church of Portland

“As a sage with scars, Paul Tripp offers us contemplation, transparency, beauty, and verse spoken straight from his soul. But the impact of this book surfaces not in the scope of Tripp’s gifts or weakness but in the page-by-page celebration of God’s unrelenting grace. If you’re looking for a daily, creative, and soul-nourishing drip of gospel truth, feast upon the pages of this book!”

Dave Harvey, Teaching Pastor, Summit Church, Fort Myers, Florida;
author, *When Sinners Say “I Do”* and *Letting Go*

“Art and poetry allow truth to enter the mind through the imagination where intellect often builds a wall of resistance. In this relatable anthology, Paul Tripp explores the tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ in such a way that comforts the conscience and highlights the sweetness of God’s forgiveness. In each meditation, you will find yourself. In each meditation, you will find Christ.”

Flame, Grammy-nominated recording artist

“This book is theologically rich, biblically faithful, and devotionally nourishing for the soul. My heart was stirred, and my love for the Savior inflamed! Read and be blessed. Read and worship.”

Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

My Heart Cries Out

Gospel Meditations for Everyday Life

PAUL DAVID TRIPP

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TO JESUS

You have done what nothing or no one has been able to do.
You have turned my life into verse
and my journey into song.

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Preface

I am not a poet; I am a pilgrim.

I am not attracted to formal, overly romantic Christian verse, but I think that we do not train our eyes to see enough, our hearts to consider enough, and our emotions to celebrate enough the glories of the grace that is showered down on us in a thousand ways every day. What you are about to read are notes from my journey through the struggle of God's amazing grace. These are my meditations on the intersection between God's ever-present grace and my ever-present battle to live out of the resources of that grace while I walk my way through this sadly broken and dysfunctional world.

You may be wondering why I used both the words "glories" and "struggle" to describe a life of grace. Well, God's grace is glorious. It is the single stellar glory of the life of God's children. There is no glory in this created world, no matter how beautiful, that can compete with the beauty of God's rescuing, forgiving, transforming, empowering, and delivering grace. There is no human achievement, no personal accomplishment, and no community victory that can do for us what God's grace can do. There is nothing that we can be given that can accomplish in us and for us what God's grace can. There is no other love that has the power to do what the amazing grace of God's boundless love can do for us. This grace really is so counterintuitive and mind-blowing that we will spend all of eternity performing exegesis on it, celebrating it, and worshiping the giver for it.

Yet, between the "already" of our conversion and the "not yet" of our home-going, God's grace doesn't always look like grace. Instinctively we think that God's grace will be a warm hug, a cool

drink, an encouraging word, or a motivating insight. We look for grace to relieve and release us, and sometimes it does, but God's grace regularly comes to us in uncomfortable forms. God's grace causes us to face things in ourselves that are hard to see, consider, accept, and confess. Often God's grace takes us into things we would like to avoid, things that are hard, discouraging, and sad. God's grace will not only give us wonderful gifts, but it will also take precious things away from us. It will not only tell us the best news ever, it will also force us to accept the worst news we could ever be told. It will not only tell us that God is strong, but it will remind us of how weak we are without him. It will not only gift us with incredible wisdom, it will require us to face the fact that sin reduces all of us to fools. God's grace will not only introduce us to the only one in the entire universe who is truly worthy of our worship, but will also expose the catalog of God's replacements that regularly capture the affections of our hearts.

One of the primary struggles of the Christian life is this: grace doesn't always seem attractive to us. You see, there is often a difference between what we think we need and what our God of grace knows we need. And even if we are right in knowing what we need, we fail to understand what is necessary to produce that needed thing in us. So often we'd rather have a season when life is easy, predictable, and the people around us are drama-free than a season where transforming grace takes us to new depths of humility, understanding, maturity, and worship. So in each of our lives grace is both a glory and a struggle.

What you are about to read are my honest meditations on that struggle. They are my spontaneous responses to my journey through glory and struggle. They are:

celebratory hymns
disappointing cries
pleas for help
groans of confusion
shouts of joy
theological meditations
desperate requests
heartfelt confessions
hope for help in temptation
quiet contemplations
honest notes along the journey

They were not written as I sat looking out the window
of my country cottage (I don't have one of those) over a
pastoral scene on a poet's retreat. They were written:

early in the morning
late at night
in physical suffering
waiting for tea at Starbucks
on the plane
in the car
in the middle of a meal
when my heart was broken
when my heart was filled with joy
when I was at the end of my rope
when what was around me was hard
when what I saw in me caused grief
when God seemed distant

when I saw my sin clearly
when I basked in God's forgiveness
when weakness seemed in me and all around me
when I knew God was near
when resting in grace was a struggle
when I knew I'd have strength for the battle
when grace seemed glorious after all

These meditations have been generating and marinating for years. They are the transparent interactions of one man with the Savior of grace. My hope is that this volume will help you to see the Savior more clearly, to understand his grace more deeply, to confess your struggle more honestly, to worship him more fully, and to find in these meditations the motivation to continue to follow the Savior even when he's leading you into unexpected and hard places. My prayer is that these meditations will stimulate a worship, rest, and celebration in you that the difficulties of life, this side of eternity, will not have the power to end.

My Heart Cries Out

My heart cries out,
but I am not
afraid,
discouraged,
panicked,
forgotten,
alone,
dismayed,
or doubtful
because in the din
of a million voices
from every place,
in every situation,
young and old
crying day and night
in weakness,
in alienation,
in fear,
and in distress,
you are not
overwhelmed,
you are not
distracted,
you are not
disgusted,
you are not
discouraged,
you are not
exhausted.
But you listen,
you hear,
you attend to
my cry
in tenderness of

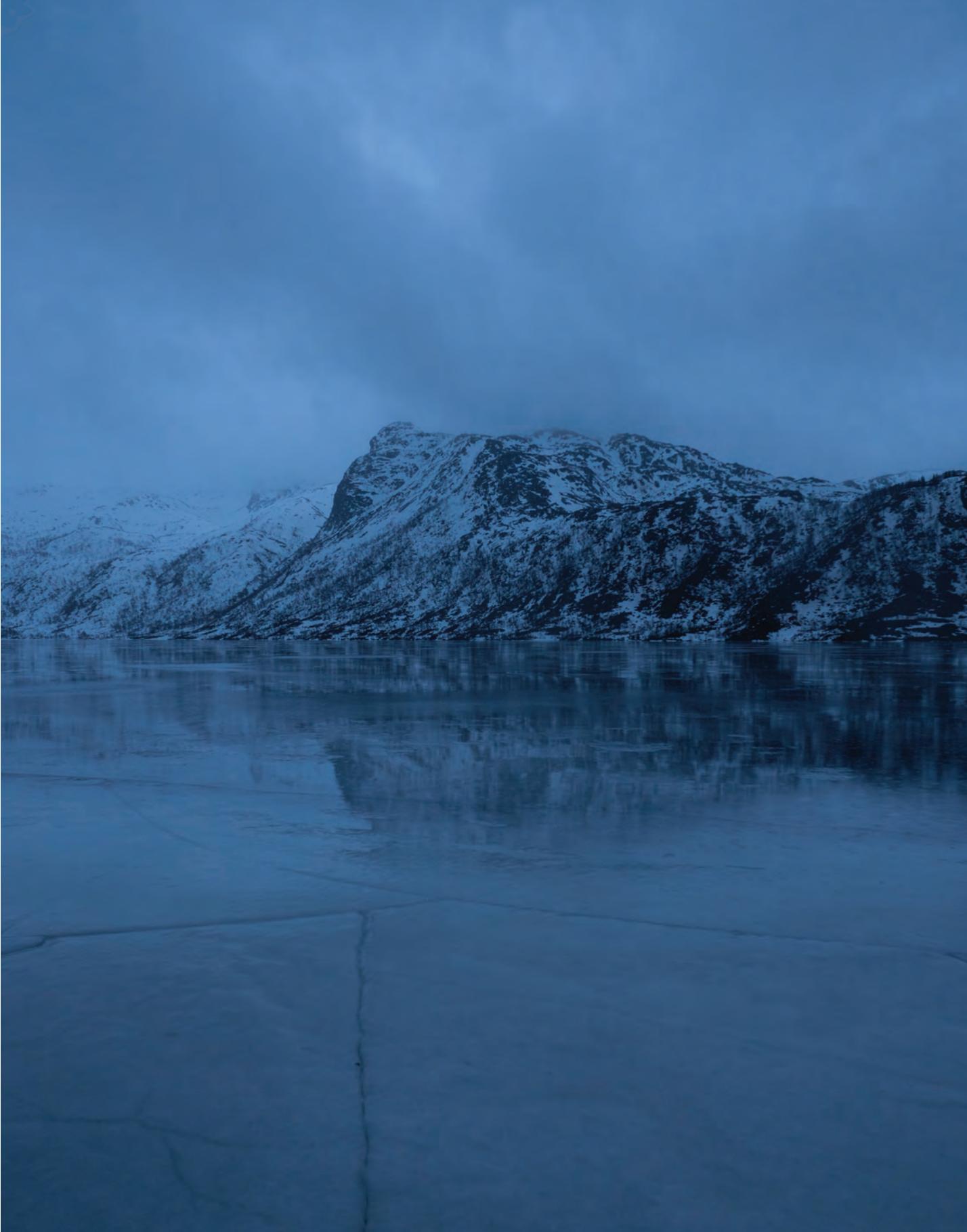
mercy,
in patience of
spirit,
and with generosity of
love.
You listen to my
plea
and you never
turn
away.
But with power and wisdom
and the tender heart of a
Savior,
you do this amazing thing—
you answer.

*For the eyes of the Lord are on the
righteous,
and his ears are open to their
prayer. (1 Pet. 3:12)*

When do you cry out to the Lord?

Do you ever slip into thinking that
the Lord might be “overwhelmed,”
“distracted,” “discouraged,” or
“exhausted” by your situation?

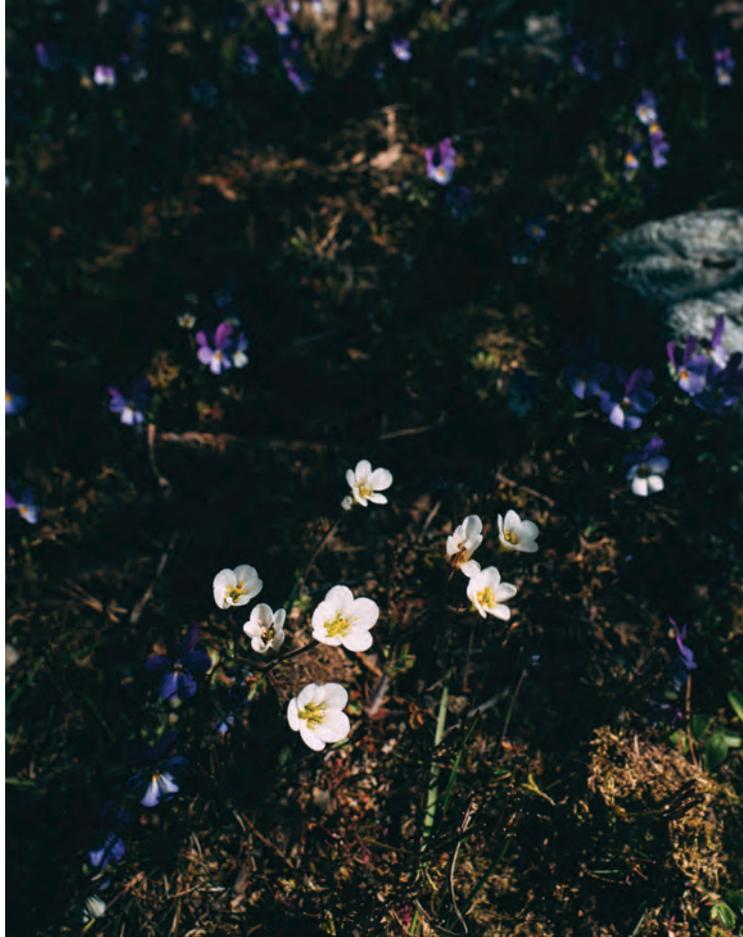
For further study and encouragement,
read Genesis 16.



Hope

The only hope,
the only help,
the only rescue,
the only healing,
the only solace,
the only balm,
the only redemption,
the only restoration
for a broken,
dysfunctional,
sin-scarred,
evil-infected,
morally fallen,
dark, and dangerous
world
isn't found in
information,
socialization,
education,
political solution,
psychological insight,
or personal reformation,
but in the willing
birth,
righteousness,
humiliation,
suffering,
sacrifice,
and resurrection
of a God-man Redeemer.
No idea can liberate,

no power can save,
no institution can redeem,
restore,
resuscitate,
or recreate
what sin has destroyed.
So a Son had to come.
Son of God.
Son of Man.
The Creator
came to recreate.
The Savior came to be
the sacrifice.
The blessed one
came to suffer,
and in suffering
to bless the world with hope,
help,
rescue,
healing,
solace,
balm,
redemption,
and restoration.
The cost of it all was
his life.
It was his birth mission,
his resurrection victory.
History marched toward his coming;
there was no other way.



*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.
(Rom. 15:13)*

What common things do you turn to as a source of hope? How do these things fall short when compared to the hope Christ offers you?

Meditate on and journal about the ways Christ has brought you hope.

For further study and encouragement, read 1 Corinthians 15.



First

It's not first about my
religious acts,
my spiritual duty, or the
degree of my obedience.
It's not first about what
I believe,
the precision of my theology,
or the truthfulness of the creed
I embrace.
It's not first about what
I give,
the regularity of my charity,
or the amount of my benevolence.
It's not first about
my teaching, my preaching,
or the truths I have shared with
others.
It's not first about
my humility, my faithfulness,
or the extent of my obedience.
It's first about you—
your righteousness,
your wisdom,
your power,
your authority,
your grace—and how
you have unleashed all of them for
my forgiveness,
my rescue,
my redemption.
My life is no longer about
me;
it is first and foremost about
you.

*For by grace you have been saved
through faith. And this is not your
own doing; it is the gift of God, not
a result of works, so that no one may
boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)*

What elements of your spiritual and
religious life are you most likely to
pride yourself in?

How can you go about today making
sure that Jesus is first in your life?

For further study and encouragement,
read John 13:1-20.



But I Can't

I wish I could commend
my righteousness to you,
but I can't.

I wish I could brag of
my strength to you,
but I can't.

I wish I could boast about my wisdom
to you,
but I can't.

I wish I could point you to my track
record,
but I can't.

I wish I could tell you that I have no
regrets,
but I can't.

You know me better than
I know myself.

I never escape your eye.
You search the deepest

regions of my heart.

You know my thoughts before
they are conscious to me.

You know my words before
I hear myself speak them.

You examine my desires before
they move me to action.

So without pretense or inadequate
excuse,

stripped of pride and self-defense,
I bow before you,

devoid of demand or argument,
and I make one plea.

It is for your mercy.

I have come to accept
what you know of me,
and I cry for one thing—
grace.



*For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
“I dwell in the high and holy place,
and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly,
and to revive the heart of the contrite.” (Isa. 57:15)*

Pray and search through your heart—are there sins you excuse or defend, is there pride or pretense, or do you demand something from God because of your self-righteousness? Humbly offer your discoveries to God.

Review your knowledge of various biblical heroes, particularly considering the moments when God revealed sin in their hearts. How did they react? (To help get started, see Job 38–42:6 or 2 Samuel 12.)

For further study and encouragement, read Psalm 139.

But Never

You humble me,
but never humiliate me.
You confront me,
but never mock me.
You warn me,
but never abandon me.
You call me,
but never leave me alone.
You discipline me,
but never beat me up.
You command me,
but never fail to enable me.
You see into my heart,
but never reject me for what you see.
You teach me your mysteries,
but never make fun of how much I don't know.
You stay near to me,
but you never tire of me.
You place your love on me,
but never withdraw it when I fail.
So I love you,
but I have come to understand that
my hope and security,
my present and my future,
my acceptance and identity,
my ability and potential,
are not in my love for you,
but in your shocking,
unfailing,
faithful,
wise,
and powerful
love for me.

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or
famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it
is written,*

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day
long;
we are regarded as sheep to be
slaughtered.”*

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors
through him who loved us. (Rom. 8:35-37)*

Recall as many times as you can where God
promises to “never” do something in Scripture.

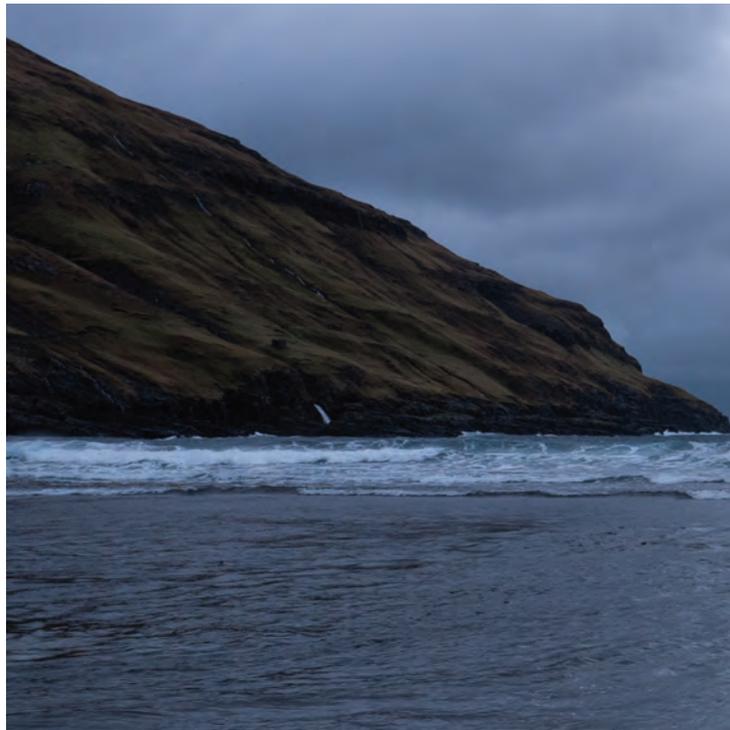
Do you fully base all of your life in God’s love
for you?

For further study and encouragement, read
Ephesians 2.

Hard Moments

Hard moments
between the already and the not yet.
Hard moments
in a world gone bad.
Hard moments
when temptation seduces.
Hard moments
with body weak and mind tired.
Hard moments
when friends promise, but betray.
Hard moments
when unexpected difficulty surprises.
Hard moments
when discouragement blinds vision.
Hard moments

when once again sin rules the heart.
Hard moments
with so many things broken.
Hard moments—
but I am not alone.
Hard moments—
yet I am never left to my limited
resources.
Hard moments
in your hands become
hard moments of transformation.
Hard moments
in your hands become
hard moments
of amazing grace.



And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

Try to recall a past “hard moment” in your life and consider how God’s amazing grace helped you through that time.

Take some time to pray that God will transform today’s hard moments in ways that leave you singing his praises.

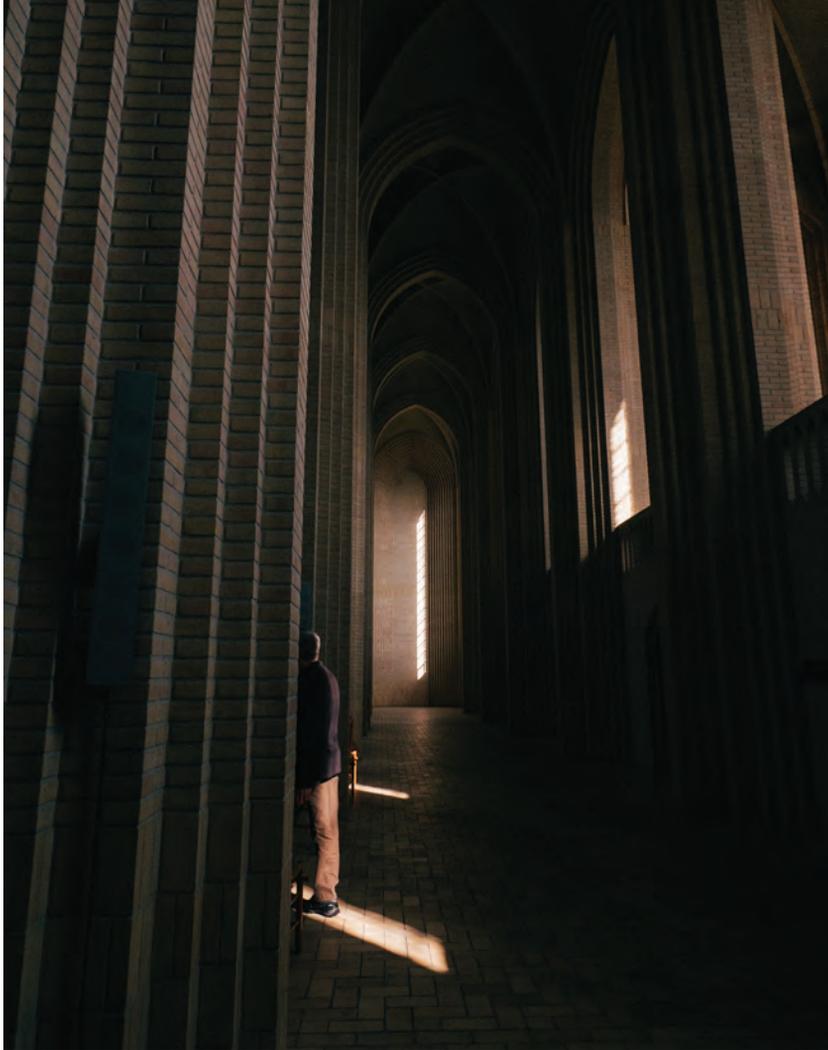
For further study and encouragement, read 1 Samuel 1-2:10.



Everyone Preaches

Every one of us is a preacher.
We are always preaching
some kind of gospel to
ourselves.
Every one of us is a theologian.
We are always repeating
some kind of belief system to
ourselves.
Every one of us is a philosopher.
We are always discussing
meaning and purpose with
ourselves.
Every one of us is an archaeologist.
We are always digging through
the mound of experiences
that is our life,
making sense of
where we have been,
what we have done,
what you have done, and
who we've been with.
We are always doing this
because we are all
image bearers.
We are created to

think,
interpret,
feel,
know,
desire,
understand,
and worship.
In our seeking to
know
we are searching for
you.
Every one of us is a worshiper
because every one of us is made
for you.
Every one of us is searching
for what can only be found
in you.
So, every one of us needs your
grace.
For there is no life,
there is no hope,
there is no knowing,
that does not begin with
knowing you.



But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matt. 6:33)

What are you searching for?

Have you ever thought of yourself as a preacher, theologian, philosopher, or archaeologist? How might these labels point you to your most important role as a worshiper of God?

For further study and encouragement, read Matthew 7:7-11.

Unfailing Love

I wish I would live with you in view—
eyes to your glory,
ears for your wisdom,
heart for your grace.

But I live with me in view—
eyes to my kingdom,
ears for my opinion,
heart captured by my will.
I know that I was made for you.

I know that hope,
meaning,
purpose,
identity, and

my agenda for every day
is to be found in you.

But I want my own kingdom.

I love my own glory.

I define my own meaning.

I delight in my control.

There's a war that never ends;
the battleground is my heart.

It's a moral skirmish
between what you have ordained
and what I want.

So I don't find pleasure in your glory;

I don't delight in your law.

But my heart doesn't rest.

I know there's a better way.

I know that you are God,
and I am not.

My sin is more than
bad behavior,
bad choices,
or wrong words.

My sin is a violation of the relationship
that I was meant to have with you.

My sin is an act
where I replace you
with something I love more.

Every wrong thing I do
reflects
a lack of love for you, and
reflects
a love of self.

Help me

to see,

to acknowledge,

to weep,

And say,

“Against you, you only,

have I sinned

and done what is evil in
your sight.”

And then, help me to rest

in your mercy,

in your great compassion, and

in your unfailing love

even as the war goes on.



You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (Matt. 22:37)

Contemplate how “sin is an act where I replace you.” How does this definition expand your understanding of sin?

How have you recently been living with yourself “in view” instead of living with God “in view”? Spend some time in prayer, confessing to God and resting in his unfailing love.

For further study and encouragement, read Psalm 51.



Like You

There is no one like
you.
There are no words
to adequately capture the
wonder
of your redeeming power.
There is no one like
you.
No one who knows what you
know.
No one who is able to do what you
do.
You reign over
all that is.
You do with your creation whatever
you want to
do.
No one can question
you.
No one has the power to stop your
hand.
You turn hardship into
rescue.
You turn suffering into
redemption.
Out of trials you bring
transformation.
Out of weakness you grow
strength.

Out of death you birth
life.
Out of darkness you bring
light.
You turn foolishness into
wisdom.
You cause idolaters to bow in
worship.
Every day you create something out
of
nothing.
Every day you make alive what was
once
dead.
Every day you redeem what seems
beyond
redemption.
There is no one like
you.
There are no words
to adequately capture the
wonder
of your redeeming power.
There is no one like
you.
No one who knows what you
know.
No one who is able to do what you
do.

*There is none holy like the LORD;
there is none besides you;
there is no rock like our God. (1 Sam. 2:2)*

Nearly every line of this poem demonstrates how there is none like God. Work through each statement in the poem and connect it to a real-life example, either from your life or from the Bible, that illustrates the statement. (For example, “You cause idolaters to bow in worship” could refer to a friend turning to Christ for salvation or might describe how Egypt was forced to set the Israelites free.)

Pray your own prayer of praise for all the glorious ways God is like no other.

For further study and encouragement, read
1 Corinthians 1:18–31 and Ezekiel 37:1–14.



Not Like David?

Aren't you glad you're not like David,
such blazoned sin; how could he?
Aren't you glad you're not like Saul,
making up his own rules; what was he thinking?
Aren't you glad you're not like Cain,
violence against his own brother?
Aren't you glad you're not like Rebekah,
such planned deceit?
Aren't you glad you're not like the Israelites,
so easily seduced by idols?
Aren't you glad you're not like Absalom;
how could he be so jealous?
Aren't you glad you're not like Elijah;
how could he forget God and be so depressed?
Aren't you glad you're not like Nebuchadnezzar;
how could he be so obsessed with power?
Aren't you glad you're not like Samson;
how could he be so easily deceived?
Aren't you glad you're not like Jonah;
how could he run from the Father's call?
Aren't you glad you're not like the Pharisees,
so religiously right, yet spiritually wrong?
Aren't you glad you're not like Judas,
selling the Messiah for a little bit of silver?
Aren't you glad you're not like the Corinthians,
so much better at division than at serving the Lord?

But wait.

You are like them, and so am I.
There is simply no denying it.
Their stories are a mirror into which we see ourselves.
We too are jealous and easily deceived.
We too are proud and obsessed with power.

We too are better at division while we run from God.
We too get angry and get seduced by idols.

In sorrow we must say,
we stand with David,
and Saul,
and Rebekah,
and Jonah,
and Elijah,
and the rest.

These stories are for us to look into and see us,
so that we are not able
to buy into
the lie of our own righteousness,
but instead,
run to God's mercy,
hold onto his unfailing love,
and finally rest
in his great compassion.

Aren't you glad you can step out of the darkness of self-deceit
and admit who you are?

*Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall. (Prov. 16:18)*

Are you familiar with the shortcomings of the individuals mentioned
in this poem? If not, find and read their stories in the Bible.

How might you be comparing yourself with others in a way that
incorrectly boosts your self-righteousness?

For further study and encouragement, read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

Weak (1)

Today I am very weak—
weak body,
weak heart,
lacking ability,
devoid of resolve,
little anticipation,
waves of discouragement,
whispers of fear,
dreading a sleepless night,
expecting the pain of the morning,
wishing to run,
nowhere to hide,
feeling sentenced to what I cannot survive.
Wondering, “How long?”
Questions—
no answers.
But I have come to understand
that my weakness is a grace,
that hopelessness is not a prison.
Hopelessness is a doorway.
There is no shame in weakness.

I was created weak,
designed to be dependent.
To confess weakness
is to own my humanity.
To own my humanity
is to embrace my need of help.
To embrace my need of help
means to open the door to God’s
warehouse of
protecting,
providing,
comforting,
confronting,
strengthening,
hope-giving, and
motivating grace.
Today I am weak,
but I will boast in my weakness
for when I am weak,
for me, you are strong.