

threads



a come-as-you-are study on faith

our royal wardrobe sewn by our personal tailor with
threads of peace & joy that fit to perfection

trunk show by the Ancients in Hebrews 11

{Neighborhood}
S T U D I E S

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Isaiah 61:10-11

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices
in my God. **For he has clothed me with
garments of salvation and arrayed me in a
robe of righteousness,** as a bridegroom
adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride
adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil
makes the sprout come up and a garden
causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign
Lord will make righteousness and praise
spring up before all nations.



a come-as-you-are study on faith
trunk show by the "ancients" in Hebrews 11

- Week 1  Garden glasses: far-sighted, God-centered vision
Abel, Enoch, Noah
- Week 2  Surrendered-Step Shoes
Abraham
- Week 3  Captive thoughts Hat
Isaac, Jacob, Joseph
- Week 4  Manna-Provision Apron
Moses
- Week 5  Work-through Shorts: not by might, by the Spirit
Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Shunammite woman
- Week 6  Identity Name-tag
Gideon, David, Jeremiah, Shadrack-Meshack-Abednego

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:7-8



what are you wearing?

a come-as-you-are study on faith

our royal wardrobe sewn by our personal tailor with
threads of peace & joy that fit to perfection

Have you ever looked in your closet and wondered, "What am I going to wear?" Then stood and stood and stood without a clue as to the answer? Have you walked into a gathering and done a little sizing up, a room-scan to be sure you're good? Or room-scan confirm the opposite, wish you had paid more attention to the invitation's "attire," then fight your thoughts so they don't ruin the *whole* day.

Ever had a battle with your clothes drawer – good or bad? Maybe you spied a cute pair of pants, the ones that are saved for *the day*. As in the day when-I-can-get-back-into – those-things. Even though a decade (or 2!) and possible birth of 5 kids has passed between today and the last time you wore them? Or maybe you spy the work-out clothes that simultaneously offer such promise yet bring loads of self-assessment.

Clothing-issues have been around since the beginning of time.

It all started in a Garden where a pair scrambled to handle a major wardrobe malfunction by doing, trying, making, fixing, & working in order to be "dressed" right, to return whole in the presence of God – all in the form of a few fig leaves.

But the Lord didn't leave them in their shame.

Those thousands of years ago, God came to them and clothed them in perfect provision. The very best they could do for themselves wouldn't have lasted in strong wind. **But God** cared for them with tailor-made outfits.

It cost him to clothe them in a way that protected them and kept them warm. The outfits he made surpassed anything than they could have asked or imagined – especially considering the fact they didn't even know what clothes were. Before a decision gone wrong, they had been pretty comfortable without them.

But God didn't stop there.

He went a ginormous step further and provided them/us clothing not only on the outside (provision), but also on the inside (salvation, holy redemption).

And the clothes He has for us are out-of-this-world Royal-Wear that fits to perfection, sewn with threads of peace, joy, hope and contentment. A far cry from the 3-way mirror, florescent-lighting gauntlet the world offers for clothing.

He clothed that pair in the Garden with outward items.

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21)

Far beyond anything they could have imagined. Especially since the making of the garments to clothe their outward bodies involved death and blood.

But these outward clothes were only a shadow of what was to come. The LORD God reaches to places we can't touch, the soul-level source of who we are, and introduces the ultimate death and blood for our inward clothes – to clothe our inside (salvation) as well as outside (perfect provision):

For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10)

So...

What are you wearing?

OUTSIDE clothes:

The Lord made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and he clothed them.

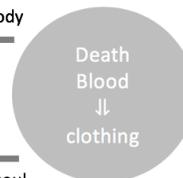
for the body



INSIDE clothes:

The Christ will suffer and rise from the Dead on the third day and repentance and forgiveness of sin will be preached in his name to all nations."

for the soul



God has a few items waiting for you in the dressing room, tailor-made, specifically for you.

They can be found on the top floor where He has put you on the special access list. Where the dressing rooms are bathed in luxury, flowing with milk and honey. And the designer label is out of this world, unlike anything you've ever known: Comfy-Couture where leggings meet the stratosphere of elegance.

It's a Spanx-free, make-up free zone. No pills, gels, fillers or regimes – the only diet here is a steady stream of soul food – delicacies grown through the knowledge of Him, experienced by partaking in all He sets before us by which He reveals Himself.

This confidence-infused come-as-you-are wardrobe wipes away any need to be or do in order to be okay. No two outfits are alike. Each one is perfectly calibrated to our personal specifications prepared in advance before we ever took our first breath.

Why does it matter?

It has everything to do with our identity and self-worth.

In *Threads*, we will be looking at patriarchs of faith from Hebrews 11 as well as we learn what it means to be clothed “in righteousness” and with “power from on high” rather than in our own effort and strength.

Together we will consider faith – being sure of that for which we hope and certain of what can't see – by using articles of clothing, things we wear every day, to act as reminders. So that when we reach for our own glasses (sunglasses, readers, etc.) we might be reminded to consider the lenses through which we see things. When we put on a hat, we're reminded to consider captive thoughts attached to Truth. As we put on our shoes, we might think about the steps we will take in a day. That more and more of them will be surrendered-steps on God's solid ground (even when that ground is water).

And as we reach for these clothes, we can be reminded to *wear* the clothes God has so graciously and mercifully and abundantly provided rather than reach for the clothes the world celebrates that we must weave ourselves: accolades, accomplishments, beauty, acumen, victories, numbers, ... and so much more.

All of which pale in comparison (understatement) to the clothes we access through faith – a wardrobe beyond compare, immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine. A royal wardrobe purchased for and placed upon us in and by love that surpasses knowledge.

Ephesians 3:17-19

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Having the clothes is one thing, wearing – not just putting on, but owning – them is another. Knowing Truth is one thing, applying truth is another. The power of Truth comes in the *practicing* of it. In the same way, the power of faith comes by putting it into motion through action steps of trust.

Wearing the “clothes” we have been given rather than leaving them at the bottom of the drawer or the back of the closet to gather dust helps us believe what we've been told to be true:

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him
who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Let's not set this royal wardrobe to the side or save them for a special occasion;
together let's wear them today. This royal wardrobe is the "attire" for any occasion,
every event, all situations.

So far beyond outward covering, this outfit goes to soul-clothing and the question,
"What is defining you?" Let's enjoy a trunk show together, worn by Hebrews 11
Ancients who have gone before us. And as we daily don our own common articles of
clothing, let's use them to remind us of the way He has clothed us.

Luke 24:49

"I'm going to send to you what my Father has promised; but stay in
the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

How

The goal of this study is to be in Scripture. Reading the word of God daily – to know the
God of the Word – without preconceptions or fear or whatever trips us up. Just read.
Because, the Word of God amazingly informs itself and offers opportunity upon
opportunity to grown in knowledge of Him. Scripture is an expansive and far-reaching
love story, intimately recorded and crafted for each of us.

This study is set up to have us engage with Scripture five days of the week. Days 1-4
focus on our *ancient* (a.k.a. faith hall of fame folks) style show models. Each day has a
Bible reading. If you do just that and stop there – terrific! But we've also provided
prompt questions for the day. We begin with the contextual 5 W's (who, what, where,
when and why) that never fail to prompt consideration and ignite learning. Though they
might seem boring and repetitive, they are simple and easy to do *any* time you open
your Bible. Which is the goal – to open Scripture on more days than not equipped with
simple tools to be able to dive in and allow the Lord to guide and teach and care for our
needs.

You can stop there – at the contextual questions – or, keep going through prompt
questions for further consideration. In fact, feel free to come up with your own
questions. The goal here is to fall in love with God's word as well as God himself.
Toward that end, each day also has a *Special Overlay* prompt for us to keep a running
list of specific things we learn about God in each day's reading.

The fifth day is called *Garden to Table*. Because if “in (God’s) presence there is fullness of joy” and “at (his) right hand are pleasures forevermore,”¹ let’s spend some time getting to know him by pulling out specific attributes from passages of Scripture. That is the goal in *Garden to Table* as well as daily *Special Overlay* prompts – a time to practice reading simply to know God.

Days 6 & 7 are yours to do with as you’re led. Maybe it’s mindful-rest, further reading or looking back over the week and re-reading (how fun!) and journaling, whatever blesses you. Jotting simple notes on what God is teaching us about ourselves and most importantly about Him helps solidify (possibly set to memory) Truth to inform our days.

That said, this is not meant to overwhelm. **Do what you can, when you can.**

Remember this is a come-as-you-are gathering. Bite off the amount you can chew and linger in the goodness of God’s Word as you are led to consume it. Simply reading the passages each day or over the weeks will prove to be a blessing.

Each day:

- **Begin with PRAYER:** “Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word.” (Psalm 119:18).
- **Read the passage.** So, start by reading – not just reading by seeing the words, but going a step further and *thinking* about them. Park preconceived ideas, see beyond what may be familiar. Ask God to open our eyes and ears to be able to see and hear what is available. The Bible is truly God’s “living word” – you never know what beautiful nuggets of truth are literally at your fingertips.

After reading, use the lines provided to journal what you observe/learn. Prompt questions are included. They are simply prompts that begin with context: the 5 W’s: who, what, when, where & why. It doesn’t have to be detailed – and some might be hard to distinguish – just a quick broad overview to help us understand what’s going on:

- **Who:** Who are the players involved? Who is the audience? Who is speaking? Who is the author? The audience? ...
- **What:** What are they talking about? Is it a Psalm/song of praise or a story or a directive? It could be several things.
- **When:** what period of time/what was happening
- **Where:** the place, surroundings
- **Why:** the purpose - is it a promise, a command, a caution,...

¹ Psalm 16:11b ESV

Followed by a variety of broad questions that will hopefully spur more questions. Just so you know, the *when* and *where* are often obscure – so don't let anything get you bogged down.

The day's reading is/may be followed by:

- **Special Overlay:** More than anything, our hope is that we will all fall in love with Scripture – truly the greatest love story ever told: God's love for us – and that we will fall in love with our Creator. Each and every day, through all the steps of inductive study and whatever other ways we interact with the passages, may our eyes and ears be ever open to see and hear God's words **about Himself**. Why not keep a running list of what we learn about God in each day's reading?

Who He Is: God is: faithful, trustworthy, a sanctuary, the same yesterday/today/forever, ...

The things He does (explicit/implied): God: hears, knows my name, is LORD, never wavers, always says what He means and means what He says, speaks ...

The things He says, literally: "But now, **this is what the LORD says ...**"

Most importantly, **read to know God**. This incredible *living word* is God's Word. There is so much to know about him and He has put himself forth from Genesis to Revelation.

The most amazing part of Hebrews chapter 11 is not the characters it outlines, but the constant behind each of them. The one true God is the Lead, the constant, in each person's story. The One who is the author and perfecter of their faith. And, fast forward/good news, He is the author and perfecter of *our* faith too!

So - **we study the Word of God to know the God of the Word** and "to be transformed by the renewing our mind" (Romans 12). The goal is not to complete the tasks but to *know Him* and live in light of His Word, will and ways.

And, as we study, let's always be **mindful of applications:**

- What does this text teach me about God?
- What does this text tell me to do?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day?

Remember, this time in Scripture is for YOU. It's meant to be a blessing, not a burden. If it's too much, do only what you can do. It's not a race or a *good-student* exercise. It's simply an opportunity to grow in our knowledge of God – walking through Scripture **together**.

If there's something you bump into where a little more information would be helpful, by all means LOOK further. We have access to terrific guidance from outside sources. **Dr. Constable's Sonic Light, Bible.org, Got Questions** are just a few.

Each week, we will have the opportunity to gather and discuss in person, but if you can't be there – connect at neighborhoodstudies.com/blog where the weekly discussions corresponding with each lesson will be posted.

Linger and Enjoy

As we read Scripture to know God, we'll learn about all the ways that HE is faithful. We'll see over and over that He never leaves us to walk alone – and that He knows us *by name*, because *we are his*.

Spend time in prayer – ask God to make His Word come alive. Ask the Lord to reveal Himself in new and meaningful ways. Journal below your thoughts, hopes, apprehensions, and prayers over the next few weeks.

*Show me your ways, LORD,
teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.
Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.*

Psalm 25: 4-6

We're excited and hope you are too. This is a *come-as-you-are* party, simply as you are. No worries about what you bring (or don't bring) to the table. Together, let's ask the Lord to keep our hearts anchored in Him, to teach us and to help us in our unbelief.

More than anything **HAVE FUN**. Enjoy and sink into all the wonderful things (even when some may be hard to swallow) the Lord has to share and teach us about himself. And more than anything, sink into our identity as daughters of The King, our Abba-Father.

We usually include a brief Bible Overview at this point. We've put it at the end of the material so it's easy to find and reference.

(And please forgive any typos - there may be a few 😊)

Revelation 19:8

It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen,
bright and clean...

Week 1



Garden Glasses

God-Centered, Far-Sighted, Eternal Perspective Vision

abel, enoch, noah

In the Garden, all was perfect as the Lord God Creator (Elohim) made it to be. Including the fact that He purposefully, knowingly placed in man's path a stumbling block. God's all-access pass was limited by two trees from which man was not to eat. Which was all good and fine until man's eyes were lured away from seeing through God's lenses to seeing through the world's lenses.

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

*When the woman **saw** that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the **eyes of both of them were opened**, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." (Genesis 3: 1-7)*

Their eyes moved from God-centered vision (complete trust in the Creator) to World-centered vision, anchored in and on themselves. From complete rest and safety in the abundance of perfect provision, to new sensations: fear, lacking, shame, striving, self-reliance, measuring up, getting ahead, falling behind ... so much more.

"... So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

The effort to clothe themselves began in the Garden and has never stopped.

Man began the process of works – doing , trying, making fixing, working to get back to God. If only they knew that their personal tailor had already prepared for them special shoes – ones laced with faith and trust uniquely designed to take surrendered steps that would actually set them free. Instead, they reached for feeble efforts to clothe themselves in His presence, with work-out rather than work-through garments to cover up what they had done, to get back to where they had been before they could see.

Before the wardrobe malfunction, they had operated in complete freedom without burden. Adam worked. He tended the garden, named all the animals and cared for them. Work wasn't toil until man began to operate in his own capacity as he understood work to be (an endless trek to do or to be enough) according to what and how they could see.

Man moved from certainty to now looking through lenses of life according to our experiences, our expectations and our limited knowledge – all of which is far from 20-20 vision.

BUT GOD – stepped in. He brings with him light, for He is Light. Our ability to see is dependent upon light – without it, we are in darkness, able to see nothing. In the Garden, sight-impairment came on the scene as the world presented darkness in the form of manufactured light, covering the Garden glasses with filters colored by lies, untruths about God and his desires for our good.

So, what are you wearing? **Lenses to see with light from the world or lenses informed by the light of the world?**

Together, let's reach for the Light so we can see accurately. See the fact that God stepped in. God didn't run from, but ran toward them/us which was part of the plan from the moment of creation. God alone is Plan A, for there is and never has been a Plan B. He is the provision. He is the peace, the joy, the righteousness. God is the power from which He clothes us on High.

Day 1:

Hebrews 11: 1-3

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word." It's easy to pass right by arguably THE most important verse

in the famed Hebrews 11. Read again and linger in verse 3 and how it informs every aspect of faith:

*...the universe was formed at God's command, so that **what is seen was not made out of what was visible.***

Then open your Bible to the beginning and ask God to reveal the enormity of his power, strength, character, order, love, attention to detail, and SO much more.

Read Genesis 1.

Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why*. It's always helpful to get an idea of context. In fact, for today, we will linger in context. Jot down your answers to these contextual questions since the Creator (Elohim), Yahweh (the self-existent one) who is at the absolute center of faith reveals so much about himself in the Creation story. Write down what you learn about *Who*. Slow down to consider *What*. Take a deep breath at *When* (is it still today? If so how?). And what about *Where* (how does location still play a role?). And then ask God to help you get a glimpse into *Why*.

God is the absolute center and the core of faith. He is the One who "commands", creates something from nothing, seen from unseen, in order to share His goodness with creation that won't be able to see Him – but will experience Him by and through faith made available by Christ's sacrifice (our inside clothes, woven together in love.)

What specific ways might our daily lives be affected by choosing to see life through God's lenses, asking him to help peel our eyes away from what is seen to what is unseen since He is power over both?

What are some *seen's* that are grabbing your attention today? How can they be informed and reframed by the One who is unseen yet absolute dominion and authority over all (Jehovah-Saboath) that is seen and unseen?

Day 2:

Hebrews 11: 4

By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Genesis 4.

Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why*. It's always helpful to get an idea of context. In this case, we're at the beginning. But as you start, don't let familiarity of a story get in the way of God's enlightening. Scripture is new every morning. Let's slow down and become more and more aware of God in the story [sidenote: God is always in the story], making it more about Him than the characters involved.

What is faith? [It never hurts to have this on repeat in our thoughts throughout each day.] What did these boys know about God? How did their knowledge inform their lives? What lenses does each use in their approach to and relationship with God? What do their approaches to God reveal about their faith? How does God react? What do we can we learn about God through these boys?

Proverbs 14:12 states: "There is a way that seems right to man, but its end leads to death" (ESV) How is the way of the world luring your thoughts and your eyes to believe and see things that don't always (if ever) give life? How might God-Centered, Far-Sighted eternal-perspective lenses help/offer hope, peace, stability, joy, ...

Day 3:

Hebrews 11: 5-6

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Genesis 5, 1 Chronicles 1:3 and Jude vv 15-16.

The story of Enoch recorded in Scripture is very short. We may have to dig a little deeper to figure out why Enoch is not only considered a faith hero, but also never died. Consider 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where and Why.) And again, it might seem like a fruitless task as most of the passage is a genealogy, but try. It might be more interesting than it looks on the surface.

What stands out to you as the most important aspect of Enoch's life? What do you think it means to "walk with God"? 1 Chronicles, the other Old Testament mention of Enoch, is also in a (much longer) genealogy. What can these seemingly tedious lists teach us about God and his character?

Read Matthew 1:1-17. Then read Luke 3:23-37. What do you learn about God by His completion of the genealogy? Have you ever thought about the fact that God begins with Adam and literally ends with Christ? Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are the last list of the lists.

Now, knowing that Enoch lived, he "walked with God" – he never experienced physical death and he was in the lineage of Christ – and, from the writer of Hebrews, that Enoch "was commended as one who pleased God," what can we learn about his faith that might increase our own (hint: it's not in about us.)

Is it possible to please God without earnestly seeking him? How can we earnestly seek Him if we don't believe in Him – and how can we believe Him without knowing Him?

Enoch spent time with God. Enoch shared intimacy with his Creator. Enoch knew God, he loved God, he defended God, he walked with God. How do you perceive *your* faith in God and how does seeking Him strengthen faith?

Day 4:

Hebrews 11: 5-6

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Genesis 6:9 – 7:16.

The story of Noah, like Adam and Eve, is familiar to most, but let's try to come at it fresh – asking God to grow us in deeper knowledge of him.

Consider the 5 contextual W's. [sidenote fun-fact: looking back at yesterday's genealogy, we can see that Enoch was Noah's great grandfather.] Where do we find mankind? What attributes of God are revealed in chapter 6? Look carefully and jot them down – even ones that might be uncomfortable. Look ahead at 7:15-16, 8:1, 20-21. What do we learn about God? How might this impact us today?

We are introduced to Noah in 6:9. What three things can we learn about him? Through what lenses did Noah see life? What role did public opinion play? In 6:22, what phrase (repeated in 7:5) shines light on one of the keys to Noah's faith relationship with God. How is the "holy fear" (Hebrews 11: 7) different from fear in and of the world? How did Noah obey?

Try for a moment to put yourself in Noah's shoes. What would it have been like to build such a mammoth vessel in the midst of fully depraved and wicked mankind? Good thing CNN or MSNBC weren't yet around. The internet would have had a feast covering the building of the ark. What must Noah have known and believed about God to not only build the ark, but also to endure the wrath of those around him as well as destruction?

What else?

Day 5:

From Garden to Table

God is life

Genesis 1

And God said: "Let there be light," and there was light. "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plant yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." It was so. "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." It was so. "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." It was good. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

God is Creator. He brings something from nothing, forms life upon his command. With his hands he forms man then breathes from himself the breath of life – the source of life.

He creates everything, and calls everything by name. *God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.*

God is ordered. Lacking nothing.

Each stage of life came into existence fully able to function within reliance and dependence upon that which came before. The sun and moon preceded water and land when needed both to exist within their boundaries. Water and land supports vegetation which in turn sustains "swarms of living creatures," all of which support livestock and all the beasts of the earth – including those created in God's image.

God sees. He knows. He understands.

He enjoys and relishes in the vibrancy and beauty of life – much of which has still been seen only by him, yet to be discovered regions of the heavens and depths of the earth known and celebrated only by Him. He knows. He commands. He cares for each and every part of life with microscopic precision.

God is relationship. My/me takes a back seat to us/our as God, the Spirit and the Word function seamlessly – together. Together, as we (the only *in-our-image* creation) are created to live.

All life in heaven and on earth is God's. He plans and allows. Nothing surprises him. For as Creator His knowledge is complete.

"Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place. ... Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth"² and all that is in it?

² Job 38:12-13



Garden Glasses

r e c a p

Every time we reach for or put on glasses, let's be reminded to consider the lenses through which we're looking. Are we using the world's lenses filtered by would's, could's, should's, acumen, achievement, numbers (including those written on tags that threaten to inform our worth according to outward appearance) OR are we looking through God-centered, far-sighted, eternal-perspective lenses.

Consider taking a phone-photo stroll down memory-lane. And think, as you see pics from all phases easy and hard, about perspective.

Personally, I get to see that:

- Life is a journey, a melding of moments collected in the bigger picture of what's important, namely people.
- We survived – more than survived
- We were stretched without breaking
- We grew in the moments that surrounded the pics, many of which were challenging, some severe
- Friendships endure
- My outward appearance wasn't quite as questionable as I thought in the moment
- It is utterly wasteful to wish away any moments or to let insecurities ruin them, and so much more.

Most importantly Garden glasses reveal Truth. God is safe. He is good, holy, just, kind, compassionate, beyond sufficient, always with us and utterly trustworthy. Something worth considering, especially as we reach for our shoes (Surrendered Steps)

Think back over the week: What have these texts taught me about God? What truths (or promises) do I need to claim? What verse(s) have special meaning? What am I wearing?

Isaiah 61:7

Instead of your shame
you will receive a double portion,
and instead of disgrace
you will rejoice in your inheritance.
And so you will inherit a double portion in your land,
and everlasting joy will be yours.

Week 2



Surrendered-Step Shoes

abraham

This week we will spend each day considering Abraham and surrendered steps. And as we put on our own shoes, sometimes multiple times a day, maybe we will be reminded that the safest steps and plans are those anchored in and upon the Rock who goes before us, behind us, above and below.

Surrendered steps are an acts of obedience, walking in trust – the action steps of faith. Faith (being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we can't see) is one thing, but stepping takes faith from acknowledgment to experience. And obedience plays a key role in our relationship with God.

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. 1 Samuel 15:22.

Why? Obedience not to be accepted or worthy or to be better than others, but actually to know God. Obedience is not a command done to us, but a gift *for* us. It brings the highest level of intimacy into play as we literally step in trust, moving our allegiance from ourselves to God. And in those steps, we counterintuitively experience freedom – something we will learn more about when we consider Work-Through Shorts. Because, unlike anything we see or know in this world, surrendered steps are not taken in our own strength, but by and in God's strength.

And, by obeying, we trust the Lord over ourselves. We look to Him rather than be absorbed in ourselves or our surroundings. We rest in His knowledge, instead of leaning into the ways that seem right to us.

Surrendered steps of obedience have been an important part of the story since the beginning – opportunities to obey since the Garden. Why did God tell them not to eat of the tree? In fact why did He put the tree there in the first place? Why did He set in their path a fork, a choice? Not as a gotcha, but to bring into play trust, to invite relationship through experience – something so significantly deeper than knowledge.

The source of what and who we trust is revealed by our actions.

In Man's limited knowledge and sight, they were easily distracted and manipulated by what looked to be true on the surface (comparing what they had to God) rather than moved to trust God who is knowledge, sees all, is Truth and faithful and good with power over all.

God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He cannot be counter to his character regardless of circumstances or situations.

2 Timothy 2:13

...if we are faithless, he remains faithful —
for he cannot deny himself.

Day 1:

Hebrews 11: 8-12, 17-19

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

...

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Genesis 11:10 – Genesis 12

Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why.*

We're at another genealogy that informs the *Who*. Though tempted to fly through and get to the story on the other side of the list, it's worth slowing down and considering the recorded details. What do we learn about people and God as we read genealogies? [sidenote fun-fact: if we look back to Genesis 5

Scripture Search: For further consideration, what do we learn about clothing in Genesis 15:1. How does that inform famous clothing verses in Ephesians 6:10-17?

Day 3: Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Genesis 17 – 18:15

Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why.*

What do we learn about Abraham and Sarah (see: Genesis 17: 5-8, 15-22 for name significance)? What is revealed about relationship with God and man in these verses? What verse or verses stand out that inform your day today. How is Abraham's trust and faith demonstrated?

Make a list of attributes you learn about God with Scripture references. [Example – God speaks – 17:3, God names – 17:5, God ordains – 17:4-6, God establishes covenants – everlasting covenants – 17: 7] and as you do, take time to linger and consider what these traits mean, their impact, the specific ways they apply to you.

Day 4:

Hebrews 11: 17-19

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Genesis 21: 1-6 and Genesis 22

Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why*. Take your time with these and linger for a moment in them. In verse 22:1, whom did God call? What was the answer to the call? What was the command? How did Abraham respond?

What do you think about the conversation between Abraham and Isaac in verses 7-8 and the action that followed? In Hebrews 11:19 (above) and 22:5, what did Abraham reason would happen?. Had he ever seen or even heard of this happening before? To what do you attribute his logic? What do you think Abraham deeply understood about God in order to obey?

Do you ever wonder why God might have directed Abraham to do something so distasteful and blatantly wrong. How could God, the ruler of all, the only true justice, compel murder? All of the gospels tell us why – it has to do with the covenant God made with Abraham. It has to do with us, with love – taking it to the soul level of relationship restored, with our inside clothes. It had to do with the Law – Christ’s fulfillment of it on our behalf for it cannot be abolished for God is holy.

Read Matthew 26:36-46. After what you’ve witnessed with Abraham, consider and comment on the parallels of the two accounts – including the emotions, the agony, tenderness, deliverance and ultimate sacrifice for love. In Abraham’s case, a ram provided the way out. The similarities of the stories end there. What was the answer to Jesus’ question and Jesus’ response in verse 42? How did Jesus respond?

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2b

[sidenote: we are the “joy”]

Now turn to and read Matthew 27:32-55. Ask God to reveal himself to you. To open your eyes to the realities of the sacrifice made upon the cross. Not only the salvation provided through the action, but also all of the emotions that surrounded the scene. Take some time to journal your thoughts.

Day 5:

From Garden to Table

God is Mercy

1 Peter 1

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

God cares for his children, whom he foreknew. He knows our location at all times, even when scattered. He provides the power for us to live. It is his power. He is the provision, the mercy, through which we live with Him in the presence of his holiness.

Grace and peace are in him, by him and through him. Grace and peace are ours to embrace in abundance according to his mercy. He *has given* [present perfect progressive verb tense: an action that began in the past, continues in the present]

new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade

God shields us with his power. The same power that defeated death – raising from the dead to never die again. God protects and empowers through many methods, including suffering. He gently grows our faith – proving himself over and over for He cannot be unfaithful/counter to his character. God is faithful.

Faith in God through Christ – seeing what is unseen, resting in peace through life's easy and hard challenges and circumstances – produces "inexpressible glory and joy." Faith so precious, even "angels long to look into these things."

God is holy. Through his mercy, God has redeemed us. Through his mercy he invites us to live holy lives through his holiness. His love for us is great. He invites us to live lives free from the pressures, the stress, the circumstance of this world in full abundance of mercy and peace.

God provides a way – a road of faith paved by trust, made known through obedience. His way is right. His way is sure. His way is life – "not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."

*"All people are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of the Lord endures forever."³*

Holy God, help us to hear. Help us in our unbelief. Help us to trust what we cannot see, to follow you – and to linger in your everlasting glory and joy born from your life-giving mercy.

³ Isaiah 40:8



Surrendered Steps

r e c a p

Why is obedience such a struggle? Maybe it has something to do with obedience’s unavoidable connection to performance and our obsession with perfection and control.

In the world’s economy calculated steps to perfection attach themselves to performance and achievement (or lack thereof) in order to shape and inform our identity. Even religion uses this play book. If we do x and y, we get z. Then I’m good. In which case, we base-line trust the ways of the world.

But what if God’s standard has nothing to do with achievement, or lack thereof, as a tool to inform our identity. In God’s economy, our identity is received rather than achieved. Our worth has been determined by Him – alone. In God’s economy obedience is not a measurement of achievement, but a tool to increase our faith through opportunities of trust, made real by surrendered-steps. Obedience not to performance or to be perfect, but in order to increase our faith.

To obey his commands (genuinely obey from the heart – which is different than being compelled out of fear) is to trust God – something that can only happen if I know Him.

What if obedience is more about faith, about knowing/experiencing God, than results?

Surrendered-stepping/obeying is the action point of trust. Trust which can only come through Faith – faith that “I am with you” (Emmanuel) actually is with me. Not in our own strength or power, but in the such amazing and hard to grasp truth that:

*... from him and **through** him and for him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen (Romans 11:36)*

Think back over the week: What have these texts taught me about God? What truths (or promises) do I need to claim? What verse(s) have special meaning? What am I wearing?

Isiah 61: 1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me to
proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives and
release from darkness for the prisoners, to
proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the
day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all
who mourn, and provide for those who grieve
in Zion — **to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of
mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a
spirit of despair.**

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a
planting of the LORD for the display of his
splendor.

Week 3



Captive-Thoughts Hat

Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

Where our thoughts gravitate and even rest is actually important.

Dallas Willard, an American philosopher known for his writings on Christian spiritual formation, expounds:

Now we need to understand that what simply occupies our mind very largely governs what we do. It sets the emotional tone out of which our actions flow, and it projects the possible courses of action available to us. Also the mind, though of little power on its own, is the place of our widest and most basic freedom. This is true in both a direct and an indirect sense. Of all the things we do, we have more freedom with respect to what we will think of, where we will place our mind, than anything else. And the freedom of thinking is a direct order to exercise it. We simply turn our mind to whatever it is we choose to think of. The deepest revelation of our character is what we choose to dwell on in thought, what constantly occupies our mind, as well as what we can or cannot even think of.⁴

And, our thoughts dart all over the place. Science has proven that a wandering mind is not a happy mind. Mostly because one thing is certain, when our thoughts wander, rarely do they travel to positive places. We tend to land on almost everything other than safe places.

But God – offers a deeply beneficial directive. “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10) From His mouth, to our ears – life-giving instruction for our benefit.

*Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.*

*“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”*

⁴ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998), p. 324.

*The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
Psalm 46:*

There's much to learn about thoughts anchored by Him in Him. About who He is, "God of Jacob" – Creator, who sees and knows all, who is faithful to all generations; about his dominion – "Lord of Hosts," Jehovah-Sabaoth, the Self-Existent Universal Sovereignty, Lord over everything in heaven and on earth; about his power and might as ruler that tenderly reminds that He "is with us" – Emmanuel (God with us) which happens to be the name of the One who makes that possible.

Be still and know.

Still goes further than resting our body in one place. *Still* as it applies to the mind is equally, if not exceedingly, important. Thoughts anchored, thoughts set "on things above", thoughts seeking to "retain the knowledge of God" require attention so that they are not "given over to a depraved mind." (Colossians 3:2, Romans 1:28)

Because, truth be told, our lives are "hidden with Christ in God."⁵ We don't have to take the world's bait. We are "children of God" (Romans 8:16). And, "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

And all of God's directives, like *be still and know*, come with custom-made clothing, lovingly set out for those to whom they belong.

*Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: **Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.** Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain..." Zechariah 4:4-7*

The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress and my Deliverer. My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:2

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Galatians 3: 26-27

Not by our strength – but by, through and in God's strength. The Lord takes captive our thoughts by our anchoring them on and in Him, as we surrender them to Him.

Before going forward, pray and ask the Lord to bring forth places where your thoughts can be set free as they are surrender to Him. Write them below in an effort to call them out from darkness (hidden in our minds) into the Light (for God is Light.)

⁵ Colossians 3:2, Romans 1:28

By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Genesis 27: 41-46, 28 and 32, then 48:1-21 (it's a challenge to cover Jacob's life in a day – understatement! So we have 2 :)

Consider the 5 contextual W's (Who, What, When, Where & Why) and record in the space below. What do we learn about Isaac, Jacob and Esau? Genesis 28:10-22 offers the first glimpse of Jacob's relationship with God. What specifics jump out to you? Do you think our Christian society today can relate to Jacob before the dream experience?

So many people grow up in a Christian homes, surrounded by semantics, morals, religion – but separated from relationship. Jacob, too, grew up knowing the name of God. Watching his father worship. Participating in religion. But apparently he had never related to God as his personal Savior, Protector, and Lord. What transpired to change the relationship? How did Jacob respond? The words spoken in v. 15 are as much for us as they were for Jacob? What does this mean to you in your life today?

Consider the interaction between God and Jacob in chapter 32. What strikes you as interesting? Have you ever cried out to God in fear for protection/deliverance? Have you ever wrestled with his provision? Does God ever say to you, "Why is it that you ask my name?"

Skip forward and read Genesis 48:8-21. How does Jacob describe his relationship with God? What do you find interesting about not only about the blessing, but also how and to whom he gives it? Why do you think he would do this?

What else?

Our minds fight the urge to place blessing's focus on earthly wealth and favor. Why not opt instead to considering and leaning into the only true blessing, one of eternal nature.

"Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be Jacob but Israel shall be your name. ... "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you."

Do I hear the message hidden in those words? The message that God's nation (his provision for sanctification, his answer to the prophetic words spoken to Jacob) is uniquely revealed in Jesus Christ. The complete and only answer to whom God so steadfastly refers.

By the end of his life, Jacob grasped the author. After years of striving, manipulating, catering, finagling, he realized that the blessing – as it was for his father before him – was never his to give. Israel crossed his hands as a gesture of submission and allowed God to bless Joseph's sons as He saw fit. The blessing authored and dispersed as only the Creator himself deems possible – not based on outward appearance or worldly tradition, but based on His will.

Day 4:

Hebrews 11: 22

By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Genesis 49:29 – Genesis 50

Like Jacob, covering Joseph's life could take days. But for this exercise, we will follow the writer of Hebrews lead and consider Joseph's bones. Which might have a little something to do with God's revelation to Abraham (Genesis 15) and the tender mercies in the form of a visual reminder of God's faithfulness.

Consider the 5 contextual W's (Who, What, When, Where & Why) and record in the space below. With regard to Who, pause on 50:4 to fill in a little about Joseph's life – the dreams, the twists, the turns, the ultimate favor found in Pharaoh's court. Consider God's story behind the story. The provision and protection amidst His covenant of redemption through the line of Abraham plays out through Joseph as he is literally (through unusual set of circumstances) placed in a position of authority that would ultimately save Jacob's family from famine.

What do we learn about God's power, protection, provision, faithfulness, dominion and authority. What do we learn about people (the Egyptians, Jacob,

Special Overlay: While reading the passage, make a list of what the Lord reveals about Himself. List anything you learn about: who He is, the things He says/speaks, the things He does (explicit/implied).

Day 5:

From Garden to Table

God Delights (in us!)

Psalm 18

He rescued me because He delighted in me.

God is: my strength
my rock
my fortress
my deliverer
my rock (unmovable, unshakeable) in whom I take refuge
my shield
my stronghold
my SAVIOR

*He sent from on high, he took me, he drew me out of
many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy...
the Lord was my support.*

From His temple He hears; He rescues

He rescued me because HE DELIGHTED IN ME

God delights in (adores, cherishes, revels in, glories in, loves... **likes**) us!

When was the last time, any time, someone has delighted in you? God does – all day, every day. And He acts on it.

He sets our feet to be secure

He trains us in strength (his strength)

He gives us the shield of salvation

His right hand supports us

His gentleness makes us great

He sets our feet on stability – wide, solid ground so we don't slip

He equips us with His strength (not ours, but His) to overcome, to be victorious – His victory through us, for us.

He is power over all – He is Lord over all

*As for God, his way is perfect; The LORD's word is flawless;
he shields all who take refuge in him.*

THE LORD LIVES

He (his love) is steadfast.



Captive Thoughts

r e c a p

Live informed by an eternal perspective. The world's pressures, stress, hardship, expectations (so much of which find their life in comparison) are here, but not in heaven.

- Remember whose we are: *You are mine. (Isaiah 43)*
- Remember your worth: *You are precious to me. (Isaiah 43)*
- Remember you are redeemed: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

In culture, Identity is achieved rather than received, making a person an object. And - like the world's splendor, such identifiers bring with them a problem: enough. **In God's economy – our identity is received.** Which is why God's grace bring peace and joy.

So – each time we reach for a hat, let it remind us to keep our thoughts anchored in TRUTH. You matter – SO MUCH. You have such great worth. And He has you covered – in everything – because

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. **He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.***

Colossians 1

Then, practice *still* by scheduling blank space on your calendar. In the car, turn OFF the music and ask God to show himself to you in creation – people, nature, creativity, ingenuity, order, ... so many things we pass every day. In a conversation, be aware of thoughts prone to wander (judgment, comparison, what-if's) and anchor them in truth and love – for others as well as ourselves.

Think back over the week: What have these texts taught me about God? What truths (or promises) do I need to claim? What verse(s) have special meaning? What am I wearing?

Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Week 4



Manna-Provision Apron

Moses

This week, we turn to consider the world's provision and splendor (that looks good and promising on the outside) in relation to the Lord's splendor (that tends to come in unusual packaging.) The world's splendor tempts us to strive toward achievement and ownership. Telling us that with them, we're okay; without them, not so much. The Lord's splendor is eternal, safe and abundant in grace and peace.

The world's splendor beacons our attention. Social media pics remind us of how we're to look. Keys (to a type of car or home or office) define who we are. Jewelry tells the world we belong (engagement ring), that we're somebody (rare stones, fancy watches). The lack thereof that we're lacking. Attire choices reveal our health and fitness acumen or laziness. Tag sizes ignite judgement, mostly of ourselves. Clothing labels or lack thereof send their own messages.

But like identity-labeling, the world's splendor brings with it that elusive, unsettling, unattainable word: enough.

God doesn't play that game. He offers eternal splendor. But the packaging is questionable at best. It often comes wrapped in brown paper, sometimes adorned with thumbtacks faced outward – an ordeal shrouded in suffering. God's splendor comes in the gifts of faith, obedience, trials, patience, compassion, celebrating the small, seeing the least. Because each of these packages have the same thing inside: God. For He IS splendor. He IS the gift.

God invites us into His splendor (that might not look like splendor as we imagine it to be) through daily faith and trust that comes with daily manna-provision.

Manna provision brings with it answers to our prayer God *please show me who You are*. Trusting manna provision increases our faith, reveals God's faithfulness, at a level of intimacy unavailable outside of faith. We know Him deeper as He works through us in all situations. In the most indescribable way – He does it for us. Which opens the absolute best gift – Grace.

But, can I rest in daily provision?

Really rest at peace knowing that today's needs are provided, that I only need to walk today's road - not tomorrow's. It is such a challenge. But, as we focus on God's Truth (allowing eternity to inform today) manna provision enters stage left. Perfect provision to live today's day – not tomorrow or yesterday, but today.

Yesterday with all its history and happenings is to be respected and handled wisely. Tomorrow with its anticipations, expectations, hope – but also worry, anxiety and fear is also to be respected and handled. But neither get to overinform or steal from today.

God's daily provision. Needs met. On a need by need basis. Never more, never less. Manna.

The hard part? Daily faith walked out in daily trust.

And, who better to opine on manna-provision than Moses. He certainly left all the world's splendor (Pharaoh's court) and rested in complete provision – the court of the eternal King.

Hebrews 11:23-29

By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

Day 1:

Hebrews 11: 23

By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Exodus 1 – Exodus 2:10

Consider the 5 contextual W's (Who, What, When, Where and Why) and record them in the space below. At a time in the nation of Israel's history when provision appeared questionable, fears ran high and God seemed far away – what do you think was going through the minds of the Israelites? What do we learn about Egypt? About Israel? God's blessing? What can the midwives response teach us about God?

In chapter two, we meet Moses. What do we learn about his family? What was Moses' lineage? Just for fun, peek back in Genesis to get an idea of their line of descent. What do you learn about God? How was Moses literally set apart? Why do you think they were able to do this? How did God provide?

Though we've done it before already, it is probably worth considering again God's faithfulness – perfectly on point.

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here.. (Genesis 15:12-15)

With that in mind, how and why did God go before Moses?

How might this account inform situations or circumstances in your own life today?

*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because **he saw him who is invisible.***

Begin with prayer, “Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word.”

Read Exodus 2:11 – 3:22

Consider the 5 contextual W’s (Who, What, When, Where and Why) and record them in the space below.

What does 2:11 tell us about Moses’s awareness of his heritage? What else do we learn about Moses in chapter 2? About Reuel (Jethro)? About God? What did Moses forgo in choosing to leave Pharaoh’s court (world’s splendor/definition of provision)? What does the writer of Hebrew’s specific reference to Christ reveal about God’s dominion? How does God’s splendor compare to the world’s splendor?

Chapter three is worth a re-read, taking the time write down specifics we can learn about God, his nature, his power, his knowledge, authority and so much more. This is God speaking – revealing for the first time his name Jehovah (YHWH) What does this name reveal? What is his directive Moses? How does Moses respond. Where does God meet him? How has God uniquely prepared Moses for this task?

What role does sight play (hint: a big one) and how?

What else?

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Exodus 13:17 - 14 (hold on to your hat – it's wild ride!)

Consider the 5 contextual W's (Who, What, When, Where and Why) and record them in the space below. We did not read all the preceding chapter that outline events leading up to Pharaoh's ultimate bowing to God's directive (*Let my people go*), but rest assured that every plague and every detail is in God's full knowledge, power and provision through which he proves himself across boundaries of time and situations. This incredible account not only addresses a nation's enslavement to an evil but much further and far-reaching enslavement of humankind to sin. It, like Noah's and others, is a shadow of the greater story within. God's sovereignty over any and all things that enslave his people culminating in Christ's ultimate defeat of death to never die again, setting his people free for the span of eternity.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

Exodus 14 is a front row seat to witness the power of the Lord God almighty – Jehovah (YHWH - I Am). How does God show himself? His tender mercy, might and power and faithfulness? Specifically, how does he provide, protect, lead, rule?

What do we learn about the Egyptians, the Israelites, Moses, God? What in the passage makes you uncomfortable? How can we surrender even these things to God? How can we and why should we rest in His sovereignty with things we may or may not understand?

How might this account inform situations or circumstances in your own life today? What has you afraid or anxious or worried? How can Moses' encouragement speak and strengthen you? What must we believe in order to receive his admonition?

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

How do you see the articles of clothing we've been considering working together?

What else?

Day 5:

From Garden to Table

God's voice is power

Psalm 29

*The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.*

God's voice is over the waters. The elements obey him. Completely. Miraculously. Even to the point of water acting at a molecular level as solid ground.

His voice creates, ignites and quiets the waters. Every storm – physical or spiritual – obeys His words.

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And it was so. (Genesis 1:6, 7b)

"...and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." (Exodus 14:21)

"Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake."

(Matthew 14:25)

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. (Mark 4:39)

God's voice is powerful and full of majesty.

God's voice "breaks the cedar of Lebanon" for He alone has dominion and authority over ALL – evidence of his power and goodness. The world's most dominant nations skip like calves at the sound of his voice.

God's voice flashes like flames of fire. It shakes our wilderness – whatever our wilderness might be. Whether we feel lost or bombarded or stuck or forgotten – nothing can hide us from him. Nothing is outside of his power and control. Nothing can resist the sound of his voice.

God's voice gives life.

God's voice strips bare.

All other voices, in heaven and on earth, cry "Glory!" in his presence. God alone sits enthroned as king forever. God gives strength to his people. God's voice presents peace. He is our strength and peace.

So with our voice we ascribe, tell of, speak and sing of the Lord's glory and strength, the splendor of his holiness. Not because God needs to hear, but we need to hear – every



Manna-Provision

r e c a p

The gift/the provision/the splendor IS GOD. For when we love, we can only do so through Him because He IS love. When we are patient, we experience HIM because He IS patience and compassion and slow to anger. When we endure suffering, we experience HIM as healer. We literally experience manna – perfect provision each day – exactly what the day needs, no more, no less.

We have packages to open every day that will deepen our understanding of how real and true His manna-gift is.

Every time we open them, our intimacy with the Lord grows. And as our intimacy grows, the less we have to prove, the less our eyes are glued to ourselves, the more we can see the people traveling alongside us whose deepest desire on any given day, in any given moment is to be known, to be loved, and to be accepted. By Him and through Him we are.

Today is the day we get to live. Tomorrow's worries and yesterday's happenings don't get to over-inform or steal from today. So,

- Practice ditching **FOMO** – Fear of Missing Out – and group pressures. Give those walking alongside a boost of *loved-in* as they're likely tempted to feel left-out.
- Practice kindness – **people matter** and could use an encouraging or even a me-too commiserating word.
- **Practice thankfulness.** Focus (with gratitude) on all we already have rather than on what we could, would or should have.
- **Practice looking up** – shift focus away from life's hectic and chaos towards perspective – eternal perspective.

Think back over the week: What have these texts taught me about God? What truths (or promises) do I need to claim? What verse(s) have special meaning? What am I wearing?

Deuteronomy 8:15-16

He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you.

Week 5



Work-through Shorts

Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Shunammite woman

The process of works started in the garden, probably the minute Adam and Eve realized they had no clothes. Up to that point, the pair was unaware. Which is interesting. It's hard to not wonder – were they happy and content bare because they were fit, svelt?

Outward appearance likely had little to do with their contentment. When they took the bait, their eyes were open. And the battle to see anything other than themselves had begun.

As a result of opened eyes, works began - doing, trying, making, fixing, working to get back to God. But left to ourselves, good luck:

*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do... So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, **who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!** (Romans 7:21-25)*

Yes – God delivers us. He has redeemed us and literally calls us His own.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! 1 John 3:1

And, in God's economy – where our identity is received and our worth determined – it never has been about OUR effort or ability or strength. It is God working in us and through us from his strength where joy and peace reside. *It is by grace we have been saved, through faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8)*. And the interesting thing about grace – it does not involve performance. By definition, it can't.

How does work enter the picture? We can circle back to our surrendered-step shoes. Obedience not to achieve or be, but to experience God's strength – working by, through and in us (Romans 11:36), according to Him.

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)

But how?

Let's take notes from His power working in some of our Hebrews 11 ancients (Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, the Shunammite woman) their work-through-shorts style show.

Day 1:

Hebrews 11: 30

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Joshua 5:1 – 6:20

Consider the 5 contextual W's (Who, What, When, Where and Why) and record them in the space below. To help a little with the when, the nation of Israel finds itself perched at the entrance of the land God had promised, the land Joseph referenced when he gave them the directive to carry his bones. Forty years have passed since God freed them from Egypt, lots of wandering, lots of protection and provision:

Yet the LORD says, "During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God." Deuteronomy 29: 5-6

Moses has died and Joshua has been placed as leader and stands at the gate of Jericho and the Promised Land.

What do we learn about the Israelites? the surrounding nations? What have they come from and what are they are going to? What event is celebrated? What do we learn about the nation of Israel? Joshua? the angel? Rahab? The Lord's directives? the unusual path to victory? Most importantly, what can we learn about God, himself?

What is its significance and why do you think manna stopped in Joshua 5? How many years had provision in this form been a part of the Israelites' days? How can we see Christ in this picture?

Who meets Joshua? What is his business and how does Joshua respond? What can we learn about God's larger story? How does that inform our role?

Scripture Search: For further consideration, what do we learn God's strength, power and might 2 Kings 6:8-22 and Daniel 10: 17-19.

Day 2:

Hebrews 11: 31

*By faith the prostitute **Rahab**, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.*

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Joshua 2

Consider the 5 contextual W's (Who, What, When, Where and Why) and record them in the space below. Who is Rahab? What can we learn about her? What are the reasons behind her actions. What does she know about the Lord? What do we learn about God?

Interested in a little background information? Flip back in your Bible to Exodus 1:1-14, 2:1-4, 3:1-22 (what is God going to do?! Key verse 3:14) and 4:1-20 to get a picture of why the Lord's Name precedes him and a glimpse into why Rahab responds as she does.

OR check out another scouting expedition (Numbers 13) for the same purpose (claiming the land the Lord had set aside for the nation of Israel – promised land – a precursor to the epitome of *promised-land* found through Jesus Christ.) What is different about this (Joshua 2) scouting expedition than the similar one in Numbers? What is the same? Through which lenses are these expeditions looking?

How did Rahab opt for and lean into God's strength – even though, at this time, she only knew Him by reputation? What does that teach us about His power? In what way can you choose God over a circumstance, an expectation or any worldly power today?

What else?

Day 3:

Hebrews 11: 31

*And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of **Gideon**, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection.*

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Judges 7.

Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why.*

We hang our hat on numbers denoting strength or popularity or even success. But, as we read the accounts of Gideon's battle, what do we learn about God's relationship with numbers? How does God protect the Israelites? How many men does Gideon start and end when gathering his army according to God's directive? How does God encourage the men before the battle? How might that encourage us today? What unconventional way does the army defeat the Medianites? Why do you think God did and does this?

What moves you in this passage? How might God's strength in us and his dominion over every power inform your life today?

What else?

Day 4:

Hebrews 11: 32-35a

*And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **Women received back their dead by resurrection.***

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read 2 Kings 4:8-36

Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why*. What do we learn right from the start about the Shunammite woman? About the prophet Elisha and his servant Gehazi? Why would the woman beg, "No, my Lord" to the prophecy of a son? Why would the events that transpired be so tragic?

Where were the woman's eyes and trust? How did that play out in her actions before her son was born and after her son died.

What do we learn about God in this passage? His power? His revelation (or withholding?) What did Elisha know about God and how did he rest in God's timing, dominion, authority and power?

What do we learn about God's working through people? Resting in His strength and power rather than our own? Resting in His strength and power rather than being intimidated by culture or by expectations or by judgement of others or even by ourselves of ourselves.

... What else?

Day 5:

From Garden to Table

God is powerful
from the book of Amos

*He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind,
and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness,
and treads on the heights of the earth — the LORD God Almighty is his name.⁶*

When situations overwhelm; when pressures weigh intense; when what is seen invites anxiety; when perception and expectations debilitate – may we reach for and tap into the power of the One who clothes us in strength.

Our all-powerful Lord:

forms the mountains
creates the wind
treads the High Places of the earth
gives life when sought
is with us just as He says through the prophet Isaiah:

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."⁷

Personally, God calls and speaks to us by name

"What do you see, Amos"⁸

He taps, employs and strengthens the weak and least likely

*"I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but
I was a shepherd, and I also took care of Sycamore-fig trees"⁹*

God is all-powerful, Lord over everything.

He:

builds his lofty places in the heavens
sets its foundations on earth
turns blackness into dawn and darkens day in to night
calls for the waters of the sea and pours them over the face of the earth
flashes destruction on the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin.

THE LORD IS HIS NAME.

He is safety, my ever-present strength and help in times of trouble.

⁶ Amos 4:13

⁷ Isaiah 41:10

⁸ Amos 7:18, 8:2

⁹ Amos 7:14



Work-Through Shorts

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Resting in God's strength and his power rather than our own just might be the most challenging clothes to wear. This one requires a lot of "show me who you are" in order to know how.

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways," declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain & snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud & flourish ... so is my word that goes out from my mouth it will not return empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. **YOU WILL GO OUT IN JOY AND BE LED FORTH IN PEACE.**" Isaiah 55: 8-12a*

Joshua acted in a most unusual display of God's strength. Obediently, Gideon whittled down his army to a small size in order for God to hit home his power and strength through his people. Rahab – a foreigner – fully surrendered to God's power, the extent of which had gone before him. And Elisha waited patiently upon the Lord – coming, going and acting in God's strength rather than his own. While the Shunammite woman held tight to her faith.

The common denominator? These people knew God. Intimately. They chose God over anything the world had to give – even when it meant waiting, even when defeating a city came in the form of simply marching around it.

Together, let's ask God to increase our knowledge of Him and to teach us how to lean into and act in His strength rather than our own.

Think back over the week: What have these texts taught me about God? What truths (or promises) do I need to claim? What verse(s) have special meaning? What am I wearing?

Ephesians 1: 17-18

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Daniel 10: 19

Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed," he said.
"Peace! Be strong now; be strong."

When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said,
"Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.

Week 6



Identity Name-Tag

Gideon, David, Jeremiah, Shadrach-Meshack-Abednego

Jeremiah 32: (the Lord God speaking)

"I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?

... I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety.

They will be my people, and I will be their God."

What's in a Name?

True story: all but one of our five kids were born with no name picked for them. Only 2 came home from the hospital named. The enormity of naming a tiny human – knowing that whatever we might choose would be with them forever – was a challenge for us.

People tend to associate meaning to a name, or want to know the meaning, or want for a child to have a name that offers promise. We are named for someone, after someone, in hopes of being someone.

A name, our identity touches on a human condition: our need to be known. The amazing thing about God? He not only knows our name, speaks our name, but goes even further to redeem our name so that for eternity (for eternity!) we are His.

Plain and simple, do we know who we are because of whose we are?

Isaiah 60: (the Lord God speaking)

"They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands for the display of my splendor. The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly.

Jeremiah 29: (the Lord God speaking)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," declares the Lord,

Jeremiah 32: (the Lord God speaking)

"In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness"

How are we known? By a new name – HIS NAME.

*And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of **Gideon**, And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.*

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Judges 6.

Today we are circling back to Gideon. This time we will look at his identity as defined by God – a new name on his nametag.

Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why*. Just a little background on *When* – Gideon takes place in the historical period of the Judges, when God acted as King through prophet/warriors called Judges. This period ends with Samuel when the nation of Israel asked, "now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." 1 Samuel 1:5

Where do we find the Israelites in this passages? Who is Gideon? What can we learn about him in this chapter? What can he teach us about God's meeting us where we are as well as God's expectations of us? God's name for us? What did God call Gideon? Would Gideon have described himself as such? What can we learn about God allowing good and bad things? Where is God in the midst? What can we learn about how God sees us vs how we see ourselves?

Do you know that within each of us, as singular as our fingerprint, God has woven giftedness and purpose? What was Gideon's? Did he believe it? What is yours? Who is the source of gifting and power? Why not ask God to show us what he has prepared in advance for us, for His glory and Name's sake.

Is there any reason to fear? be anxious? worry? (all of which are completely snuffed out by peace) Why or why not?

Gideon, afraid and hiding, saw himself as weak and least – born of least. God called him by name, "Gideon ... mighty warrior." Who knew? God did. It was by design.

Day 2:

Hebrews 11: 31 - 34

*And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about **David** and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.*

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read 1 Samuel 16: 1-16.

This is a familiar story, but try to read it with fresh eyes. Begin with the 5 w's – *Who, What, When, Where and Why*. What do we learn about Samuel? What do we learn about God's sovereignty? his power to determine identity? Did David do anything to warrant his new designation? How is the bigger story and God's faithfulness at play? (check out Matthew 1:6) How does it all fit together? What does that reveal about God? His sovereignty? His control?

How does obedience play out in this passage? How does Samuel go about his task? What do we learn matters to God? How does this go against the world's ideals?

David, sling-wielding shepherd boy, the youngest and, by the world's standard, not even considered man enough to be introduced as Jesse's son. Yet God sees beyond what man sees.

The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

...Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one." David.

How does God's approach inform our worth and identity compared to the world's approach?

lions; **quenched the fury of the flames**, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read Daniel 1:1-6 and Daniel 3

Start with the who, what, when, where and why. In this story about four boys, raised in the court of King Josiah, living in exile in Babylon – three of whom face a fiery furnace – how do their names come into play? How about God’s Name. To whom do the boys look for their identity. How significant is that to them? How do they face one of history’s most ruthless leaders based upon that identity? How does it work out for them – the good and the bad? What do we learn about the power and authority of God? his walking alongside us? Faith (hope & trust in the unseen)?

Why do you think they are not easily swayed from their trust in God? Dare we trust him the same way? To the point we could receive and believe:

*But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; **you are mine**. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you. **When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.***

*For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom Cush and Seba in your stead. Since **you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you**, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you;... (Isaiah 43:1-5a)*

How far did these boys take action steps of faith by trusting in, surrendering to God? Did they believe whose they were? How can we?

Regardless their name-changes, how does their identity stay the same – defined by God? Lots of things in this world try to inform our identity with name changes or lack thereof (titles, groups, designations, parenthood, etc.) – how is our identity as defined by God sealed?

What else?

Day 5:

From Garden to Table

God is safe

Psalm 31

But I trust in you, O Lord. I say, "You are my God."

In all situations – whether circumstances and pressures bear down upon me or whether my own wayward actions or prideful inclinations lead me or my thoughts astray – God is my rock and my fortress.

For His Name's sake [*who He is, His character that cannot change: His faithfulness, His stated steadfast love, His holiness...*] God:

saves me

leads me

guides me

redeems me

God is my refuge.

He: sees my affliction

knows the distress of my soul [*such intimacy, depths I likely don't know myself*]

keeps me safe

He sees, hears and is graciously with me in my times of anguish, sorrow, shame and fear.

My times are in His hand.

He makes his face to shine upon me.

He saves me in in steadfast love.

His goodness is abundant.

He protects me.

He wondrously shows his steadfast love.

He sees me and hears my cries for help even when I feel "cut off from (His) sight."

I can never be cut off from Him – according to and determined by Him.

This truth is hard to believe since nothing in this world offers such un-earned, unwarranted love and safety.

Lord, help me rest in Truth according to you rather than all I might see and believe in the landscape around me. In the same way you help us in our unbelief, please step in and fuel my trust so that I might step on and stand upon your solid ground.



Identity Name-Tag

r e c a p

*These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only **together with us** would they be made perfect.*

Hebrews 11:39-40

It's our turn. Let's talk identity as it specifically relates to us. What does your identity name-tag say?

You are known and unconditionally loved. It might be hard to believe, especially during years when acceptance, belonging, being known seems to endlessly dart just outside of our reach. But such love from the One who defines love is worth considering since He is Truth.

*But now, this is what the LORD says ... "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you **by name; you are mine**.... you are precious and honored in my sight, ...because I love you" Isaiah 43:1-2,5*

Your worth has been determined – that your identity is defined only by Truth – Truth that you are uniquely gifted with unique purpose. Truth that you never have to do or be in order to be okay. Truth that in Christ we have been set free. Truth that God sees us as precious, priceless.

At the 2017 National Prayer Breakfast, U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black shared that after memorizing 1 Peter 1:18-19 [*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ...*] he, "as a ten-year-old boy, had enough analytical power to know that the value of an object is based upon the price someone is willing to pay."¹⁰

Why not sink into and be overwhelmed by Truth rather the world's stress or pressures? God gave everything because to God you're worth it. Allow that truth to wash over you and to inform your worth – as well as the undeniable worth of the people (created in His image) walking next to you – today and every day.

Our identity is in God, defined by God. We are known to God, by God, by name – even a name known to Him that has yet to be revealed to us:

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyvNg1kk9tQ>

Matthew 6:30

But if God so clothes the grass of the field,
which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown
into the furnace, will He not much more
clothe you?



what are you wearing?

put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your mind, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesian 4: 22b-24

What are you wearing? The royal wardrobe that has not only been made in advance and set out for you, has actually been put on you as permanent-wear. "It is finished" – a completed act that reigns supreme, in need of nothing – perfect provision that comes with *grace and peace*¹¹ in abundance¹².

...because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love. 2 John 2-3

As we get dressed, as we grab our clothes for the day, let them also serve as reminders

- To **see** through God-Centered, Far-Sighted Eternal Perspective lenses
- To **surrender our thoughts** to Truth that they may be set "on things above", seeking to "retain the knowledge of God" – so that they are not "given over to a depraved mind." (Colossians 3:2, Romans 1:28), but set free
- To walk in obedience, a tool to increase our faith through opportunities of trust, made real by **surrendered-steps**. Obedience not to performance or to be perfect, but in order to increase our faith.
- To focus on **work-through** rather than work-out clothes as we ask God to reveal the mystery of his strength in and through us
- To rest in God's perfect provision, **manna-provision** – our every need met today. Respecting tomorrow's worries, hopes, anxieties, expectations and yesterday's happenings (with its circumstances, guilt, hurt, ...) but not allowing either to over-inform today.
- To live out our worth that has been determined and to live in **our identity that has been received** (not achieved) from the One, who says: "You are mine"

Then, dressed in our comfy-couture royal attire, eyes no longer myopic upon ourselves, maybe we can encourage the person walking alongside who could use some loved-in since they likely feel left-out – in desperate need to be loved, to be known and to belong.

¹¹ Romans 1, Galatians 1, Ephesians 1, Philippians 1, 1&2 Corinthians 1, 1&2 Thessalonians 1, 1&2 Timothy (grace, mercy and peace), -- actually all of NT letters

¹² 1,2 Peter

1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Quick Bible Overview

Since we will be covering a lot of ground and since it's always good to be reminded, here is a quick snapshot.

BIBLE OVERVIEW: The Old & New Testaments

If we went to the book store, we would see the books arranged by subject and type of literature. Our Bible works in a similar way. It is one book, yet like a store houses many books that are arranged by subject and type. The Bible's arrangement begins with two major books: the Old Testament (before Christ) and the New Testament (from Christ's birth – on.)

Old Testament

The Old Testament is made up of 39 individual books written by twenty-eight different authors and spans the period of two thousand years. It begins with creation and tells the story of the Jewish people up to the time of Christ.

Within the **Old Testament**, are several books. The *historical books*, arranged chronologically, the *poetic books*, and the *prophetic books*. The prophetic books *proclaimed* the word of God both for the future and for the present. These books were penned before, during and after the time of the Jewish nation's exile from the land promised to them by God.

Even then, keep an eye out for the story behind the story – the bigger picture love story written by God to each of us, the underlying and woven throughout story of salvation and redemption.

Old Testament books fall within certain periods of time:

- **The Patriarchs** covers the Lord's setting apart a people/nation through which redemption would come. Genesis chapter 12 records the covenantal promise made by God to Abraham. A promise fulfilled by Christ through the line of Abraham.
- **The Exodus/Law** covers the period of the Jewish nation in which God leads them out of captivity in Egypt and into the land promised to the Patriarchs.
- **Judges** covers the period of time when the Lord led and governed the Jewish nation. God worked through *Judges* who were not only leaders, but also warriors and prophets.
- **The Kings** cover an expansive time in the Jewish nation's history chronicled in 1st & 2nd Kings, 1st & 2nd Chronicles as well as most of the poetic and all of the prophetic books. The prophetic books, located at the end of the Old Testament, are designated as major and minor simply based on size. They have further designation associated with the time of their authorship.

Time periods: Pre-Exile – before the Israelites were taken over by other nations and exiled from their land (PreE); during the Israelite’s Exile (E), and Post-Exile (PostE).

Historical: the history of the Israelites	Poetry –fits into the context of the historical books	Prophets: Major & Minor (based on length of book) written during the time of 1 & 2 Kings/Chronicles
Genesis – “The Beginnings” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - of man (Gen 1) - of sin (Gen 3) - of God’s plan of redemption (Gen 12 – from Abraham will come the seed through whom everyone will be blessed – Jesus) - of the patriarchs/fathers of faith 	Job – timing is during Genesis	Isaiah (PreE)
Exodus – “to leave” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moses - Deliverance from evils of Pharaoh - Introduction of the Law - The Wanderings 	Psalms – written during the time of 1 & 2 Samuel, Kings & Chronicles	Jeremiah (PreE)
Leviticus – “the Law”, expands upon the Law and how we should live so his people can be set apart, so that life might go well with them.	Proverbs – wise words of life written mostly by Solomon (King David’s son)	Lamentations (PreE)
Numbers –counting of the people	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel (E)
Deuteronomy – “second law”, a restating of the Law and the story of the Israelites	Song of Solomon	Daniel (E)
Joshua - faith leads to obedience which leads to blessing		Hosea (PreE)
Judges – disbelief leads to disobedience which leads to consequence - then to repentance & redemption over & over		Joel (PreE)
Ruth – story of a faithful woman in the period of Judges		Amos (PreE)
1 & 2 Samuel – beginning of the Jewish kings		Obadiah (PreE)
1 & 2 Kings – history of the kingdoms		Jonah (PreE)
1 & 2 Chronicles – history of the kingdoms repeated		Micah (PreE)

Ezra (exile/post exile)		Nahum (PreE)
Nehemiah (exile/post exile)		Habakuk (PreE)
Esther (exile)		Zephaniah (PreE)
		Haggai (PostE)
		Zechariah (PostE)
		Malachi (PostE)

The Period between the Old and New Testaments is designated by 400 hundreds “years of silence” – as far as the Lord outwardly communicating with the Jewish people. The silence was broken by the Lord’s covenantal promise (from Genesis 12) coming to fruition through an unlikely event that involved a faithful, young girl.

New Testament

The **New Testament** is made up of 27 individual books written by nine different authors. It records Jesus’ birth, ministry, death & resurrection as well as the ministry of His disciples. It also includes the prophetic book of Revelation, written by John. The New Testament covers a time period of less than a hundred years. It is made up of **Historical Books** (up until 60 AD), the **Pauline Epistles** (written between 48-67 AD) and the **General Epistles** (written between 48 and 95 AD).

Historical Books Gospels by author:	Pauline Epistles (authored by Paul)	General Epistles
Mathew	Galatians (48 AD)	James (48 AD, author James, half-brother of Jesus)
Mark	1 & 2 Thessalonians (50 AD)	1 Peter (62 AD, author Peter)
Luke	1 & 2 Corinthians (53 AD)	2 Peter (62 AD, author Peter)
John	Romans (53 AD)	Hebrews (67 AD, author unknown)
Acts	Ephesians (60 AD)	Jude (AD 67, author Jude, brother of James, half-brother of Jesus)
	Colossians (60 AD)	1 John (95 AD, author John)
	Philemon (60 AD)	2 John (95 AD, author John)
	Philippians (60 AD)	3 John (95 AD, author John)
	1 Timothy (62 AD)	Revelation (95 AD, author John)
	Titus (62 AD)	
	2 Timothy (67 AD)	

Though certainly not exhaustive, we hope that’s helpful.

